

Youth hurt by rubber coated bullet

HEBRON (AFP) — A Palestinian youth was wounded by a rubber coated bullet Sunday when Israeli soldiers opened fire to disperse stone-throwing protesters in the divided West Bank city of Hebron, witnesses said. About 20 youths threw stones at a large number of soldiers deployed around the enclave where some 400 Jewish settlers live in the centre of Hebron, witnesses said. Palestinian residents said tensions rose in Hebron after Israeli soldiers reported that a shot had been fired at one of the army outposts in the Jewish enclave on Saturday night. Troops fanned out and stopped many Palestinians, but no evidence was found that a shot had actually been fired, the army said. Palestinians said scuffles broke out during the army search and some Arabs were beaten. They said Sunday's stone throwing was a response to the previous night's incidents.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالإنجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الراي»

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AMMAN MONDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1997, SHA'BAN 22, 1418

Price: Jordan 200 fils

Government increases investment requirement to acquire citizenship

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Kingdom has tightened rules under which Arab investors can gain Jordanian citizenship, raising the ceiling of money deposits and investments they have to make, government officials said on Sunday.

place an interest-free deposit of \$750,000 in the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) for five years, instead of \$500,000 applicable now. "Or, they will have to make real investments worth \$500,000 in agricultural, industrial and other projects" instead of the present \$350,000, he added.

But the new rules slashed the number of Jordanians that have to be employed by these projects from 20 staffers to 10, Dr. Anani said. Officials said over 500 Syrians, Lebanese and

Iraqis as well as Palestinians holding various travel documents have benefited from the investment-linked citizenship rules that were introduced in 1971. Officials said the new rules did not contradict a new spirit of economic openness that has swept the country over the last two years. Jordan in September allowed 100 per cent foreign ownership in banking, insurance, telecommunications, transport and mining as part of efforts to attract more overseas funds and raise the

Regent calls for development of mechanism to strengthen NGOs

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Sunday called for developing a comprehensive mechanism for strengthening non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which can play a significant role in addressing developmental and humanitarian issues such as refugees, poverty, the environment and natural disasters.

In remarks at the opening session of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) meeting which was attended by HRH Princess Sarvath, the deputy honorary vice president of the Red Crescent, the Regent stressed the need to introduce legislation which would protect refugees and displaced persons who are denied their rights in many parts of the world.

Prince Hassan said countries of the region should contribute to the articulation of a code of conduct that recognises the importance of the human dimension in international politics.

The Regent called on participants in the meeting to adopt practical measures to promote humanitarian causes. He called on the ICRC to disseminate information about its goals and to work with decision makers in order to ensure that humanitarian issues receive the attention they deserve in international politics.

Prince Hassan stressed the importance of the new humanitarian order which he had proposed and which the U.N. adopted.

He noted that the 8th Islamic summit in Tehran unanimously called for a new and just international order and an Islamic code of conduct that calls for the resolution of conflict through peaceful means. The meeting was organised by the ICRC to review the implementation of the international humanitarian law in Lebanon, Jordan and Yemen. It was attended by delegates from the three countries.

Addressing the meeting held at Amra Hotel, the ICRC representative in Jordan,



Jacques de Maio, stressed the need for all countries to include in their own regulations and laws certain provisions for ensuring the implementation of the international humanitarian law. The ICRC, he said, has created a special department,

which has its regional office in Amman, to help countries introduce such legislation.

He thanked Lebanon, Jordan and Yemen for their efforts to ensure respect for human rights.

Ra'afat, Fara'aneh face Lower House scrutiny over 'private' visit to Knesset

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Two Jordanian deputies whose recent visit to Israel drew widespread condemnation told Parliament on Sunday they did not regret the four-day visit.

Mohammad Ra'afat, an Islamist deputy representing the Palestinian refugee camp of Baqa'a and his colleague Hamadeh Fara'aneh, an independent (Amman second district) said they were invited to go to Israel by an Arab-Israeli Knesset (parliament) member.

"The visit of Muslims to Palestine, especially to Jerusalem, is in conformity with Islam," Mr. Ra'afat told disgruntled deputies during a regular session, part of which was focused on the visit.

"Whether Jerusalem is occupied by the infidel Jews or not... it is authorised by Islam to take such a step," said the fiery mosque preacher-turned politician.

The two men, elected on Nov. 4, returned home early yesterday to face a barrage of criticism in parliament, among their constituents and in local newspapers.

The house of Mr. Ra'afat was put under police protection to prevent angry residents of the camp from causing any harm to the deputy or his family.

Many, including lawmakers, were particularly critical of the timing of the visit, saying the two chose to go to Israel when the hard-line policies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were stalling Arab-Israeli peace talks.

The big shock was caused by Mr. Ra'afat's apparent change of heart. The fiery sheikh based much of his

election campaign on rejecting Arab-Israeli peace and Jordan's 1994 treaty with the Jewish state.

Both met with Knesset Speaker Dan Tichon and the chairmen of the foreign and interior affairs committees in the 120-seat parliament.

Many deputies demanded their expulsion from the 80-seat House long before Sunday's regular meeting.

"Despite all those who opposed our visit, what we did is correct and right as far as we are concerned," said Mr. Ra'afat as deputies tried to interrupt him several times.

"I am not affiliated with any party or group," he said. "I am with Allah who guides me in all what I do," added Mr. Ra'afat, who received over 8,000 votes in the camp.

Deputy Hmoud Khalayleh urged Parliament to form an investigation com-

mittee to look into the reasons that prompted the trip. He said the report should be discussed in a closed-door meeting.

In a bid to calm down the deputies, Lower House Speaker Sa'd Hayel Srour told the lawmakers that the visit was a personal matter and did not represent the Parliament.

"Parliament is not committed to the outcome of this visit which is merely a private one and represents nobody but the two deputies," said Mr. Srour.

He emphasised that the two members were not authorised by the Lower House to undergo the trip.

Several MPs were denied permission to take part in the debate which was ended by the Lower House speaker.

"We should not turn a deaf ear to this matter," said Mohammed Azydeh, an independent Islamist.

"I am not happy with the attitude adopted [by the speaker] during the debate. The unprecedented visit is dangerous and should be handled seriously," Mr. Azydeh said.

Following the session, Mr. Ra'afat declined to answer questions on his visit but his colleague Mr. Fara'aneh said it was part of his struggle against the Israeli occupation.

Despite the visit "I am against the Israeli occupation and its anti-Palestinian policies," said Mr. Fara'aneh, a frequent visitor to Israel.

Asked whether the time was suitable for such a visit to Israel with Mr. Netanyahu's hard-line policies and his refusal to implement agreements signed with the Palestinians, Mr. Fara'aneh said that the "time was very suitable

(Continued on page 7)



Hamadeh Fara'aneh and Sheikh Mohammad Ra'afat, two members of the Lower House of Deputies read the 1994 peace treaty signed between Jordan and Israel during a Parliamentary session in Amman Sunday debating their visit to the Israeli Knesset (photo by Yousef 'Allan)

If Netanyahu insists West Bank part of Israel, Palestinians will demand '47 U.N. partition plan

GAZA (AFP) — The Palestinians will demand implementation of the 1947 U.N. partition plan for Palestine if Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu continues to insist the West Bank is part of "Israel proper," the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) said Saturday.

"If this happens, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) will demand a return to the 1947 frontiers and the implementation of U.N. Resolution [181] of Nov. 29, 1947," the secretary

general of the Palestinian presidency, Tayeb Abdul Rahim, told AFP.

The U.N. partition plan, which Israel accepted at the time but which was rejected by the Arab states, approved a partition of the then British administered territory of Palestine which would have given the Palestinians more land than they are currently pushing for.

The plan approved the division of the territory between two independent Jewish and Arab states and a U.N. administered zone around the holy sites of

Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Areas which are internationally recognised as part of Israel, such as Jaffa and the Galilee, were allotted to the Arab state.

Mr. Abdul Rahim said Mr. Netanyahu's comments Friday, which provoked a strong rebuff from the European Union and criticism from the United States, showed a "colonialist and imperialist mentality."

Israeli officials sought to play down Saturday the significance of their prime minister's comments.

He had not meant that the

West Bank was legally part of the Jewish state, said Mr. Netanyahu's media advisor David Bar-Illan.

"It is a fact that it does not belong to the state of Israel, this is a fact. But he meant that it was part of Erez Israel," he told AFP.

"Erez Israel" or Greater Israel, is a religious and historical term used by Jews to refer to the area between the Mediterranean and the Jordan river, which religious nationalists in Israel feel should also be the boundaries of the state itself.

Somali factions reach agreement

CAIRO (AFP) — Somali warlords have reached a "historic" reconciliation agreement which will be announced on Monday at a formal ceremony at the Egyptian foreign ministry. Egyptian officials said on Sunday.

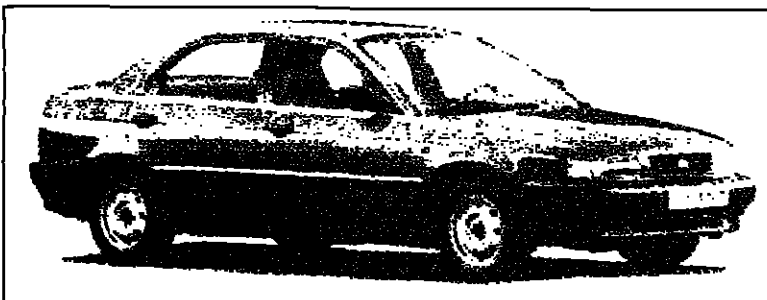
"For the first time the representatives of the Somali factions have reached comprehensive agreement for unification and have reached an agreement on power-sharing and on forming a national interim government as well as on a national conference of reconciliation," an official said. Medhat Al Kadi, an Egyptian foreign ministry official in charge of East Africa and Horn of Africa issues, said: "It is an historic agreement for Somalia. Somalia has been without a government since the overthrow of Mohammed Ziad Barre in 1991.

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Israel to disarm Jewish radicals in deal with Palestinian authority

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel has agreed in a joint security pact being worked out with the Palestinians to confiscate weapons from Jewish radicals who could carry out anti-Arab attacks, the Yediot Aharonot newspaper reported Sunday.

The plan, being drawn up with mediation from the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, is part of an emerging package deal that would link a further Israeli troop withdrawal from the West Bank to firmer Palestinian commitments to fight Islamist activists.

Yediot Aharonot quoted Israeli security officials as saying Israel agreed that the counter-terrorism pact would be reciprocal and that in exchange for a Palestinian pledge to dismantle illegal armed groups, Israel

would disarm Jewish radicals.

Israeli and Palestinian officials confirmed this week that they were narrowing differences over the terms of a new security pact, viewed as a key to breaking the nine-month deadlock in the peace process.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Friday that he had put forward a security proposal after discussions with Palestinian "contacts," and the Palestinian National Authority countered with its own plan for security cooperation.

The United States has sought to meld the two plans into a final package and President Yasser Arafat said Friday that his side had agreed to the U.S. version. Mr. Netanyahu said talks

were continuing.

According to the Yediot Aharonot, the draft agreement includes Israeli demands for the arrest of specific activists and a formula under which in cases where the Palestinians dispute the evidence against the suspects, CIA representatives would rule on whether they should be detained.

Mr. Netanyahu has said he will not carry out the new troop withdrawal from the West Bank, required under interim peace accords, until Mr. Arafat takes firm and verifiable action against activists responsible for killing scores of Israelis over the past four years in a bid to torpedo the peace process.

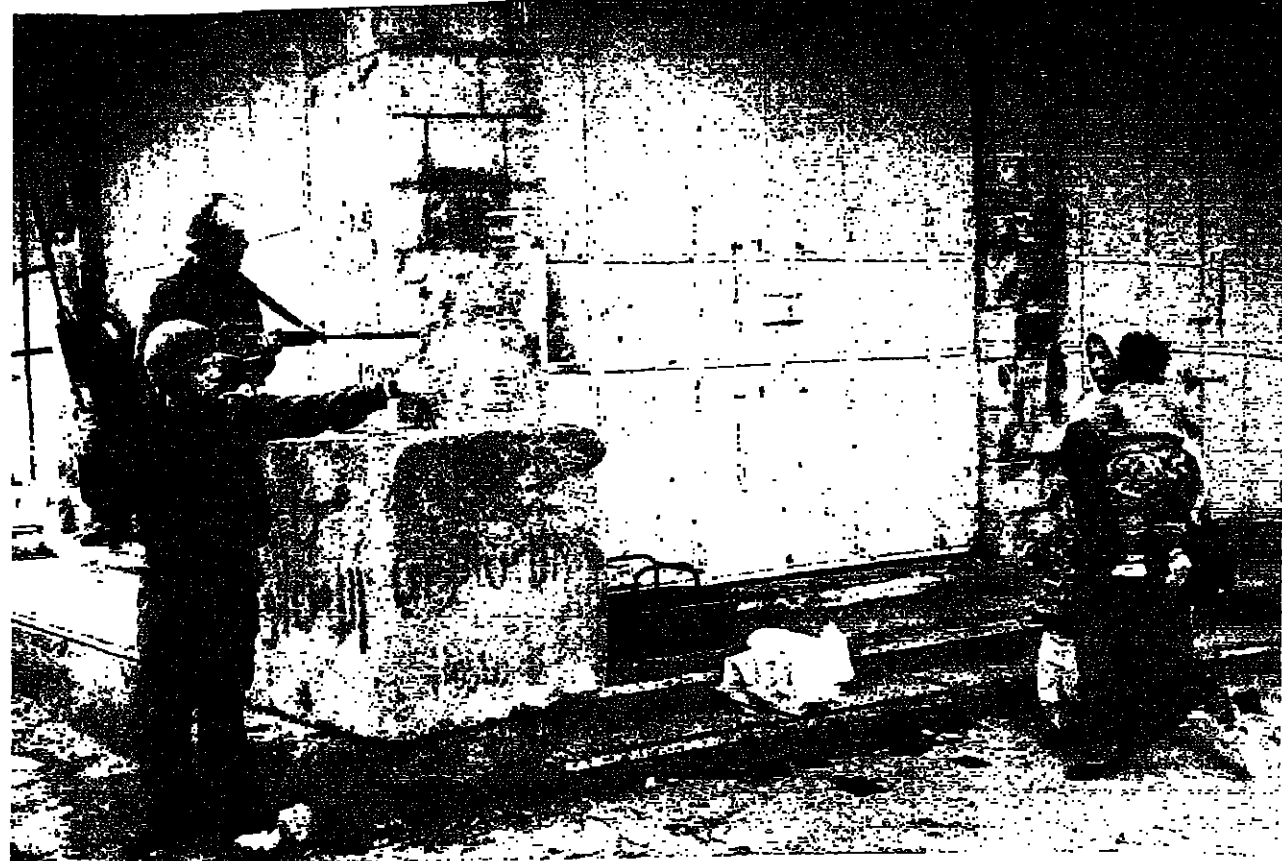
Jewish militants have also been responsible for numer-

ous attacks on Arabs in recent years, including the massacre of 29 worshippers in a Hebron mosque in 1994 and a shooting spree by an off-duty soldier in January which wounded several Palestinians in Hebron's main market.

Also Sunday Israeli police sources said security forces had been put on alert for possible attacks by Jewish militants aimed at torpedoing a planned Israeli troop pullback from the West Bank.

Police arrested two right-wing Jewish activists early Sunday as part of the alert, they said.

Tens of thousands of Jewish settlers living in the occupied territories, many of them political militants, carry weapons ranging from pistols to assault rifles.



ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CLASHES: An Israeli soldier on Sunday motions to a Palestinian woman holding her children to quicken her pace as clashes erupted between Palestinians and Israeli troops in the West Bank town of Hebron (AP photo)

Iraqi newspapers dub U.S. weapons inspectors 'spies'

BAGHDAD (AFP) — American weapons inspectors working for the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) charged with disarming Iraq were acting as "spies" for the U.S. government, the Iraqi press said Sunday.

The newspaper Babel, run by President Saddam Hussein's elder son, Uday, singled out for criticism two American leaders of UNSCOM inspection teams, Scott Ritter, who is still working in Iraq, and David Kay, who has left the country.

"When the disarmament teams started their mission [in 1991], they inspected production sites and arms dumps, but now America, with its agents Rolf Ekeus [the former head of UNSCOM] and his assistants, like the spies David Kay and Scott Ritter, have started to lead inspections anywhere and at any moment," the paper said.

"The inspections have even covered civil service

offices, sports clubs, places of worship, universities, schools, kindergartens, residential buildings and tourist sites, which the inspectors have entered without warning and without respecting Iraqi laws.

"These experts are breaking padlocks, forcing wardrobes, opening up document wallets, searching through people's personal belongings, and searching under sofas and carpets and even in rubbish bins," the paper said.

"What is strange is that it is all happening with the full knowledge of the Security Council. How can the United Nations have any self-respect when such actions are carried out in its name?" the paper asked.

The paper's attack on U.N. weapons teams follows two Iraqi complaints about UNSCOM inspections in the past week, both apparently involving U.S. inspector Mr. Ritter.

Iraq accused a pilot carrying out a weapons inspec-

tion Saturday of breaking the rules governing inspections of "sensitive" sites.

General Hussam Mohammad Amin, director of the Iraqi body which liaise with UNSCOM, said inspectors had carried out three surprise visits of "sensitive sites" that day, all of them headed by Mr. Ritter.

On Thursday Iraq complained about the methods used by a team headed by Mr. Ritter during an inspection of a tourist site it said had been carried out without coordination with Iraqi officials.

Access by UNSCOM to highly-sensitive "presidential" sites is the centre of the current stand-off between Iraq and the United Nations.

Iraq says it will not grant access to the sites, which it regards as symbols of its sovereignty.

The United Nations insists that Security Council resolutions require unconditional access for the inspectors to all sites.

Qatar criticises offensive image that riled Egypt

DOHA (AFP) — Qatar distanced itself Sunday from an unflattering caricature published here last week of the head of Sunni Islam's highest authority, in the latest incident to heighten tensions with Egypt.

The Qatari foreign minister, Sheikh Hamad Ben Jassem Ben Jabr Al Thani, said, "I am not content with the publication of this caricature, and it's improper toward a man of religion."

The Qatari paper Al Watan, which is close to the foreign ministry, published a caricature Thursday mocking a meeting of Cairo-based Al Azhar's Sheikh Mohammad Sayyid Tantawi, and the

Islamic chief rabbi for Ashkenazi, or eastern European Jews, Israel Lau.

But the Qatari minister was quoted by the official news agency QNA as explaining that the caricature may have been the result of provocation.

He said on the sidelines of the annual Gulf Cooperation Council summit in Kuwait that after the Dec. 3 reconciliation of his country and Egypt, "we stopped all the press campaigns against Egypt... but the Egyptian press continues to write about it."

"And Egyptian officials continue to make statements, which I believe triggered a feeling of inferiority," he

added. Sheikh Hamad added that he did "not want to harm the two countries' reconciliation." "We are happy for our relations with Egypt to be good," he said.

The Egyptian news agency MENA reported Saturday that Al Azhar institute strongly denounced the caricature, which showed Sheikh Tantawi shaking hands with Rabbi Lau with a card referring to a belly-dancer in his pocket.

The meeting last Monday in Cairo between Sheikh Tantawi and Rabbi Lau was the first of its kind with an Israeli chief rabbi.

The Qatari foreign minister's remarks came after

Egyptian authorities turned away two Qatari travellers who arrived in Cairo Saturday on a flight from Doha.

The airport officials were enforcing a new policy requiring visas from Qatari nationals even though the Egyptian ambassador in Doha, Mohammad Menissi, had said that the visa requirement would only come into effect Sunday.

Relations between the two countries deteriorated sharply after Qatar's decision to host an economic conference with Israel last month despite an Egyptian-led boycott by many Arab countries.

In addition, the Qatari foreign minister himself sparked

Egypt's anger by accusing it of involvement in a failed coup attempt in Doha in February 1996, a charge Cairo strongly denies.

In October, Doha stopped granting visas to nationals from seven Arab countries, including Egypt, saying the move was part of security measures for the controversial regional economic conference.

Qatar had already stopped granting work visas to Egyptian nationals in November 1996, the Egyptian ambassador said. This had led to a drop of between 15,000 and 20,000 in the number of Egyptians working in the emirate, he estimated.

Arab Israeli MP winds up Syria visit

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Israeli Arab opposition deputy Azmi Beshara ended a visit here Sunday during which he twice met Syrian Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam.

The Israeli Communist Party member said he briefed Syrian leaders on the "internal situation in Israel" and that he had asked about Syria's position in order to explain it after the visit which was "useful for both sides."

Mr. Beshara also said a Palestinian delegation would soon visit Syria, which broke off peace talks with Israel in February 1996. Syria and Israel signed a disengagement agreement after the 1973 Middle East war.

The Israeli parliamentary member, who was refused entry into Lebanon Wednesday where he expected to

participate in a seminar, said he "does not understand what happened."

He said that speaker of parliament Nabih Berri and other Lebanese officials had welcomed his planned visit. Mr. Beshara added that he hoped to go there "in the near future," without giving a date.

Lebanon and Israel have been officially in a state of war since the creation of Israel in 1948. Lebanon bars entry to Israeli citizens or other nationals with Israeli stamps on their passports.

The deputy, who arrived in Syria Monday, held talks with Foreign Minister Farouq Sharara, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine leader George Habash and Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine chief Nayef Hawatmeh.

'Vote for IAF doves kept party alive in political, parliamentary scene'

AMMAN (J.T.) — A member of the Shura Council of the Islamic Action Front (IAF) Sunday expressed the view that the victory of the party's moderates in last weekend's council elections means that the party has not given up on involvement in the country's political life.

The moderates, or "doves," won 80 per cent of the seats of the council, which is considered as the party's decision-making body.

This deprived the "hawks" of the ability to influence the party to adopt a policy that runs in harmony with the IAF's mother organisation, the Muslim Brotherhood, which had influenced the IAF to boycott the 1997

general elections, according to Hilmi Asmar, a columnist at Al Arab Al Yawm Arabic daily.

Mr. Asmar, one of the council's doves, expressed the view that relations between the party and the Brotherhood would be left to hibernate until the Brotherhood elects its own shura council, a few months from now.

Another Islamist, Samih Maaitah, echoed Mr. Asmar's view, saying that the shura council's elections represented a defeat for the hawks' stands and a clear vote for involving the party in the Kingdom's political and parliamentary life.

Mr. Maaitah, who is also a columnist for Al Arab Al Yawm, said the failure of Imad Abu Dayyeh,

believed to have been the real mastermind of the party's elections boycott, is a clear indication of the party's future political stands.

The boycott decision was behind the resignations of such moderates as Abdullah Akaitah, Musa Abantash, Ishaq Farhan, Bassam Emoush, and Mohammad Oweida, who had been leading party members in the past.

The newly-elected shura council is scheduled to elect a 13-member executive committee in its first session on Dec. 26. The executive committee will then elect a new secretary general to succeed moderate Ishaq Farhan, who has served as the party's head for two consecutive terms.

River blindness ravages Sudanese town

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Some 80,000 people in a southwestern Sudanese town have lost their sight due to an outbreak of river blindness, a health official has said.

Leila Abulfutuh, who runs a programme to fight river blindness, was quoted Sunday in the Al Rai Al Akher newspaper that 95 per cent of Raga town's 400,000 inhabitants had

contracted the disease. Twenty per cent, or 80,000, were already blind, she added.

River blindness is caused by a parasitic worm transmitted by black flies. Symptoms include severe itching and disfiguring lesions that often lead to blindness.

Some 18 million people have the illness in Africa and Latin America, and one

million are permanently blind or vision-impaired.

Raga is a cross-roads town, along a river of the same name, in Bahr Al Ghazal state, 75 kilometres from Sudan's border with Central Africa Republic.

Ms. Abulfutuh said the Sudanese health ministry and the U.N. World Health Organisation were cooperating to fight the disease.

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16:30...Neighbours
17:00...French Programmes
19:00...News in French
19:15...French programme
19:30...News Headline
19:35...Comedy — Murphy Brown
20:00...The Health Show
20:30...Babylon-5
21:10...Highlanders
22:00...News in English
22:30...Emergency Room
23:10...Cosmos

PRAYER TIMES

05:05...Fajr
06:27...Sunrise Doha
11:34...Dhuhr
14:18...Asr
16:41...Maghreb
18:04...Isha

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De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.

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The Latter-Day Saints Tel.
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Church of Nazareth Tel.
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The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 811295

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614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Temperatures are expected to rise slightly with clouds appearing at high altitudes and winds southeasterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be southeasterly moderate. On Tuesday, skies will be partly cloudy with a chance of

showers in the northern parts of the Kingdom. In Aqaba, it will be relatively cold at night and warm during the day, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min/Max temp.

Aqaba...02/14

Deserts...09/22

Deserts...zero/14

Jordan Valley...07/20

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 12, Aqaba 20 Humidity

readings: Amman 60 per cent,

Aqaba 37 per cent.

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Dr. Mukhlis Mazahreh...820425

Dr. Munther Al Qatani...779959

Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyib...620115

Firas pharmacy...661912

Ferdows pharmacy...778336

Al Asema pharmacy...637055

Naioukh pharmacy...623672

Al Salam pharmacy...636730

Yacoub pharmacy...644945

Shmeisani pharmacy...637660

Najib pharmacy...847632

IRBID:

Dr. Fawzi Abul Haija...252970

AL Quds pharmacy

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ZARQA:

Dr. Salah Safarini...987565

Khalifeh pharmacy...985417

EMERGENCIES

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Civil Defence Department...661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue...630341

Civil Defence Emergency...199

Rescue Police...192, 621111, 637777

Fire Brigade...617101

Blood Bank...775121

Highway Police...843402

Traffic Police...806390

Public Security Dept...630321

Hotel Complaints...605800

Price Complaints...661176

Water & Sewerage Complaints...897467

Amman Municipality Complaints...787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance)...121

Overseas Calls...010230

Central Amman Telephone Repairs...623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs...661101

Jordan Television...773111

Radio Jordan...774111

Water Authority...680100

J. Electricity Authority...815615

Electric Power Co...636381

RJ Flight Information...08-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

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Luzila...630195

Hussain Medical Centre...813813/32

Khalidi Maternity...642811/6

Akileh Maternity...642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity...642362

Malhas, J. Amman...636140

Palestine, Shmeisani...607071

Shmeisani Hospital...669131

University Hospital...845845

Al-Muasher Hospital...667227/9

The Islamic, Abdali...666126/37

Al-Ahli Abdali...664164/6

Italian, Al-Muhajreen...777101/3

Al-Basit...775111/26

Army, Marka...891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital...602240/50

Amal Hospital...674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery...865199

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Zarqa National Hospital

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Ibn Sina Hospital... (09)986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital

.....(09)990990

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Greek Catholic Hospital

.....(02)272275

Ibn Al Nafies Hospital

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AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital

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ARRIVALS

Princess Basma meets with women's groups to discuss elections results

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Princess Basma Sunday urged women's groups to pursue efforts in preparation for the coming stage in parliamentary life in Jordan and to work out special mechanisms enabling women to overcome obstacles that impede their activities in political fields.

The Princess was addressing a group of women representing non-governmental organisations who met with her to exchange views on the outcome of last month's parliamentary elections, in which no women candidates were elected.

The women activists demanded that the government include a provision allocating 20 per cent of Lower House seats to women in the new elections law that it will refer to Parliament for debate.

During the meeting, the activists discussed a range of topics connected with the role of women in public life and in political work.

They agreed on the need to involve women's groups in



HRH Princess Basma discusses means of removing obstacles blocking the full participation of women in the Kingdom's political life with representatives from several women's groups (Petra photo)

collective endeavours to work out a common plan to develop women's participation in the decision making process.

The meeting came close on the heels of another by

women's groups that ended last Thursday with a list of recommendations, including a demand for a quota.

Attending the meeting were Shadia Nuseir, Princess Basma's advisor on women's

affairs, Amal Sabbagh, secretary general of the Jordanian National Committee for Women, and Salwa Naser, the committee's coordinator for non-governmental organisations.

Representative to Cairo conference criticises Israel's view of peace

CAIRO (Petra) — Jordan has again voiced criticism of the present Israeli government's policies in the occupied Palestinian territories and demanded that U.N. Security Council resolutions be implemented, including the right for Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland or receive compensation.

Director of the Department of Palestinian Affairs Ibrahim Tarshihi said the Israeli government has proven that it understands "peace" as an opportunity for swallowing Arab territories, pursuing settlement construction programmes thereon, and Judaizing the city of Jerusalem, which he said remains part of the Palestinian lands occupied since 1967.

Mr. Tarshihi, who was delivering Jordan's address Sunday to a meeting in Cairo by countries supervising the affairs of Palestinian refugees, said Israel is seeking to maintain its military, economic, and technological superiority over the Middle East and to pursue its confiscation of Arab lands and natural resources.

The recent Israeli statements about plans for withdrawal from two, six, or eight per cent of the occupied Palestinian lands only reaffirm the Jewish state's determination to deny the Palestinians their legitimate rights and reflect Israel's disregard for the principles of justice and international legitimacy, said Mr. Tarshihi.

The "security slogan" upheld by the Israeli government has thus become the main reason for the lack of peace, he said.

The Israeli government should realise that no security can be realised by disrespecting the peace accords, escalating oppressive measures against the Palestinians, and denying them their rights by imposing closures on towns and detaining thousands of Palestinian people in Israeli jails, he stated.

Mr. Tarshihi said Israel must respect the fourth Geneva convention on the treatment of people under occupation, give up its de facto policy, and desist from changing the character of the religious, demographic, and geographic

character of the Palestinian lands.

Nearly 1,400,000 Palestinian refugees live in Jordan, which spends up to \$350 million annually on providing them with basic services, according to Mr. Tarshihi.

While U.N. Security Council Resolution 194 provided for the right of the Palestinians to return to their homes, Resolution 337 demands that all Palestinians displaced after the 1967 war be repatriated, he said.

He warned that the U.N. Relief and Works Agency, which provides aid to the refugees, would be forced to reduce its social, educational, and health services unless further funds are raised from the agency's donor nations.

Prime minister proposes increasing retirement age of civil servants to 65

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Sunday suggested that civil servants be allowed to remain at their jobs until they reach the age of 65, rather than retiring them at the age of 60 as is the case at present.

At a meeting he chaired at the Ministry of Finance, Dr. Majali said this proposal was floated by a number of deputies during the Lower House of Parliament's debate

on the government's statement of policy last week.

Special laws should be enacted in this matter to help Jordan accommodate socio-economic changes and developments, he said.

The prime minister also urged the Ministry of Finance to simplify the procedures connected with collecting taxes, including income tax, and to allow collection to be conducted

through banks.

Efforts should be made to avoid referring tax-related issues to court to be settled there, he added.

During the prime minister's visit, he met with Minister of Finance Suleiman Hafez and his senior assistants in the presence of Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs and Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs Jawad Anani.

Discussion at the meeting tackled the question of securing decent housing for all government employees on state-owned land, especially in outlying areas around the cities. He noted that such projects can only be implemented after a comprehensive survey has been conducted.

Mr. Hafez reviewed the ministry's duties and future plans.

Clinical instructors conference to open Tuesday

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Second National Conference of Clinical Instructors will be held tomorrow at the University of Jordan with the participation of Jordanian and Italian professionals, according to a press release Sunday.

The governments of Jordan and Italy started a technical cooperation scheme in 1987

to update Jordanian hospital nurses called the "Clinical Instructors Project."

The project included the setup of a modern training institute located at Al Basbir Hospital in Amman that has since then granted the Diploma of Clinical Instructor to more than a hundred nurses. The vast majority (92 per cent) of

Jordanian government hospitals are now provided with at least one specialised nurse, the clinical instructor, and teaching equipment, the statement continued.

A clinical instructor is able to assess which type of updating courses should be provided, based on the actual needs of the patients and the existing

nurse skills. This system ensures that nursing care is continuously upgraded to new techniques and recognised standards of quality, the press release read.

The conference will present the results of the project to date and sketch out interesting future developments, the announcement concluded.

Children at orphanage face happier Ramadan this year

By Nadia Mukhlis
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Less than a year ago, visitors to Al Ashrafyeh orphanage were usually received by frail, sick-looking, and poorly-clothed children, but today a huge change has taken place.

Due to the efforts and continuous attention of His Majesty King Hussein and other concerned people, visitors now see orphans who, if lacking the blessings of a family and a home, enjoy a decent level of care and all basic necessities.

The plight of four-year-old Nura, an orphan at the institution suffering from an untreated medical condition, exposed the actual conditions the chil-

dren at Al Ashrafyeh orphanage were living under to the media and the King.

"I saw with my own eyes that the place was crowded and old, lacking qualified persons to run it and help the children," said the King in a letter to former Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti.

"I also witnessed a low standard of health care, malnutrition, unclean surroundings, a shortage of clothes, and a lack of basic requirements of such foundations," he stated.

The King ordered that the institution be put under the supervision of the Royal Court and the orphanage is now managed by Rania Khasawneh, a former worker at the Ministry of Social Development.

The old building was renovated at a cost of JD300,000 and new facilities have been added, due to the efforts of the engineering staff of the Royal Court, she explained.

Roula Mouhaseh, an official at the Ministry of Social Development who was serving as an acting director during last Ramadan, said "the iftar [breaking of the fast] meal was so poor, lacking in all nutritional standards."

Now, the food at Al Ashrafyeh is prepared under the supervision of a specialist to ensure that all nutritional factors are taken into consideration. Ms. Khasawneh said.

The lack of family values led to the creation of a more home-like atmosphere, Ms. Khasawneh explained.

"The institution now has bedrooms, play rooms, TV rooms, bathrooms, and dining rooms to give the children the feeling of going from one place to another and not of being imprisoned in one room as was the case nine months ago," she stated.

The institution cares for 77 children, with every seven children sharing two nannies, she explained.

The nannies, who are on call 24 hours a day, are responsible for the children's well-being, clothing, feeding, and homework, according to Ms. Khasawneh.

Clothing is provided by the Ministry of Social Development twice a year (in summer

and winter) as well as on both eids (feasts), she said.

Al Ashrafyeh now has its own medical and dentistry clinic, operated by specialists who perform regular medical check-ups on all the children.

Last February, the institution housed 187 orphans, some of whom have been transferred to the Hashimiyeh Palace, now known as Dar Al Birr, which was officially opened under the patronage of HRH Princess Zein.

With Ramadan approaching and the Koran's various verses urging Muslims to help the underprivileged and poor in our society, notably orphans, those in need should not be forgotten, as the children at Al Ashrafyeh once were.

Conference on low-quality water ends with call for information centre

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A four-day consultation meeting on the re-use of low-quality water in sustainable agriculture ended last week with experts calling for the establishment of a centre for disseminating information and research findings, and for regional training on the use of low-quality water.

Representatives from 11 Near Eastern countries discussed the need for a wastewater users manual addressing management practices at the farm level.

Deliberations focused on environmental and health aspects of using this type of water. The director of the wastewater department at the Water

Authority in Jordan, Abdul Wahab Matar, told the Jordan Times that low quality water comprises treated wastewater including the effluent from the sewage system and industrial factories, highly saline brackish water, and agricultural drainage water.

The entire region relies on the treatment of wastewater, since it is cheaper than desalination, experts say.

"It costs 25 cents per cubic metre to treat wastewater, compared to \$1 for the desalination of water," remarked Salim Saraf, regional irrigation and water resources officer at the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the U.N.

In 1985, Jordan's 'Ein Ghazal wastewater treatment plant was

abandoned mainly due to environmental reasons including the disagreeable odor emitted and the produced effluent, which "was so bad" that it affected the groundwater in the Zarqa stream as well, Mr. Matar told the Jordan Times.

Also, it cost over half a dinar to treat a cubic metre of water, in contrast to twenty five piasters per cubic metre at Al Samra plant, which is the largest wastewater treatment plant here.

According to Mr. Matar, there are presently 16 wastewater treatment plants operating in Jordan, treating 70 million cubic metres of water per year. Seven per cent of the treated water is used directly for irrigating olive and fruit trees, for

example, while the remaining quantity is mixed in rivers and dams thus upgrading its quality for unrestricted irrigation.

The efficiency of wastewater treatment plants is reduced by the concentration of organic loads in incoming water to the plant. Mr. Matar related this to the low consumption of drinking water allocated to each person in Jordan.

"The daily consumption of water per capita in Jordan reaches a maximum of 150 litres, which is one of the lowest figures in the world," he noted. Jordan's problem lies in water scarcity and not overconsumption, Mr. Matar said.

The Water Authority of Jordan, the Royal Scientific Society, and the Ministry of Health

are charged with monitoring low quality water, which "meets the specifications required by the World Health Organisation and Jordanian health standards," Mr. Matar stated.

Ghassan Hamdallah, regional soils officer at the FAO, told the Jordan Times that the only reservation for the use of treated wastewater are biological in nature, since this water might contain pathogens hazardous to public health and the labourers operating the irrigation systems.

This event was organised by the FAO regional office in Cairo and the WHO Eastern Mediterranean regional office in Alexandria, in collaboration with the Ministry of Water and Irrigation.

1997-1998 Fall / Winter Collection

Fashions to fall for

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WHAT'S GOING ON

LECTURES	FILM
* "Jerusalem Since June 1967" (in Arabic) by Mr. Faisal Al Hussein at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabel Amman at 6:00 p.m.	* Video cartoon film "Asterix et le coup du menhir" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabel Weibdeh at 4:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.
EXHIBITIONS	
* "The Strangest Plant in the World! Natural History and Ethnobotany of the Hydro-raceae" by Dr. Lytton Musselman at the Binational Fulbright Commission in Jordan on Tuesday Dec. 23 at 4:00 p.m. (Tel. 684-760).	* "Modern Bulgarian Art" at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until Jan. 5.
CONCERT	
* Musical performance by the Trio of the National Music Conservatory (Tunor Ibragimov, Ali Musa and Zvonka Al Bakri) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.	* Works by about a hundred artists from Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Lebanon and Jordan at Hamourabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street, until Feb. 20 (Tel. 5536098).
	* Paintings by Samia Zaru at Amman Bookshop, Jabel Amman, Third Circle, until Dec. 24.

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How many bookshops in Amman stock the entire 1997 list of N.Y. Times Bestsellers:
Only One

How many bookshops in Amman imported 3000 titles of books published in 1997:
Only One

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Swefieh, Naser Abu Khalaf - 857900

Shmeisani, ElZay Marriott Hotel - 607607 ext. 2245

Arsafieh, Factory showroom - 09/850200 ext. 213

Jabel Amman, Naser Abu Khalaf, facing Alborge building - 653001

South Korea's jailed former presidents to walk free

SEOUL (AFP) — Two former South Korean generals-turned-presidents will walk free from separate prisons in Seoul this week, possibly as early as Monday (today), pardoned and with all their civil rights restored.

The decision to free the former heads of state, Chun Doo-Hwan and Roh Tae-Woo, was taken jointly Saturday by Kim Young-Sam, the man who sent them to jail, and "endorsed" by president-elect Kim Dae-Jung, their former victim.

Both had been convicted, Mr. Chun at first to death, last year of amassing \$1.5 billion in slush money between them while in office from 1980 to 1993, massacre and mutiny.

Analysts here say no one could be more qualified than the 73-year-old president-elect, a former leading dissident, to make the amnesty decision accept-

able to his fellow former victims of Mr. Chun's harsh regime.

Kim Dae-Jung himself was put on death row by the Chun government, before being reprieved, on trumped up charges of instigating the bloody 1980 pro-democracy uprising in the southwestern city of Kwangju in which more than 200 died.

A "son" and hero of Kwangju, which erupted in an orgy of celebration on his election Thursday, it would now be hard for even the die-hard opponents of the amnesty to go against the decision, the analysts say.

And the pardon would also make it easier, they say, for Kim Dae-Jung, who does not officially take office until Feb. 25, to free those languishing in the same prisons for breaches of the country's harsh National Security Law.

The president-elect, who has become increasingly conservative since his active dissident days, has vowed to maintain the law, which prohibits all unauthorized contacts with, or praise of Communist North Korea.

But, as the London-based human rights group, Amnesty International was quick to remind him on the night of his election last week, "Kim Dae-Jung has pledged that he would consider measures such as the release of some, but not all, prisoners of conscience."

Sunday prison officials told newspapers here that Mr. Chun and Mr. Roh, who have spent two years behind bars after the humiliation of being displayed on public television in prison uniforms, took the news calmly.

There were rumours that Mr. Chun, who in the minutes before the prison doors

clanged shut behind him in December of 1995, delivered an angry denunciation of Kim Young-Sam, might make a statement.

But his lawyers did not confirm the rumours and prison officials told newspapers the two continued their routine of exercise and reading, while their families prepared to welcome them home for Christmas.

Approval by the cabinet, meeting in special session Monday, is expected to be a formality especially as Kim Young-Sam's own son, Kim Hyun-Chul walked free last month after serving only five months of a three-year sentence for graft and tax evasion.

The decision to free the junior Kim had been greeted by newspapers here with little comment, but fiercely derisive cartoons of him walking past the closed cell doors of Mr. Chun and Mr. Roh.

Yeltsin could take two-week holiday to complete recovery

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin could take two weeks holiday in the New Year to help him fully recover from a heavy cold, Interfax news agency cited informed sources as saying Saturday.

The vacation would enable the Kremlin chief to gather his strength before resuming a full work load and leaving on an official visit to India set for Jan. 19-20, the unnamed source said.

However, Mr. Yeltsin himself will make the final decision on whether to go on holiday soon after his return to the Kremlin later this month, Interfax quoted the source as saying.

Friday presidential doctors said they had persuaded Mr. Yeltsin to remain at the Barvikha clinic just west of Moscow for another week, overcoming what one aide called the president's "burning desire" to return to work.

"It could be that some business would call on Boris Nicolayevich to work sooner, but from a purely

medical standpoint, we'd like him to stay at the sanatorium for another five to seven days," chief Kremlin Doctor Sergei Mironov told a press conference Friday.

The medic said Mr. Yeltsin would remain at the clinic until the third week of December, returning to his Kremlin office before the New Year. Aides said Mr. Yeltsin would hold a series of meetings with top officials before year's end.

Mr. Yeltsin's health has been the subject of intense speculation since he was admitted to Barvikha 10 days ago suffering from a chill and an acute chest infection.

The Moscow stock exchange fell heavily on the news and again dipped Friday after the announcement Mr. Yeltsin needed longer to recuperate and a worse than expected currency forecast from international rating agency Standard & Poor's.

Kremlin officials have fuelled speculation by giving contradictory reports on the president's departure

date from Barvikha.

Presidential aides' economy with the truth last year — describing Mr. Yeltsin's eve of reelection heart attack as a simple cold — has left officials with a credibility problem.

Radio Moscow Echo, usually well-informed on presidential health matters, reported last week that Mr. Yeltsin had been admitted to Barvikha after suffering a severe brain spasm, a potentially serious condition, and not a chill as officially claimed. The Kremlin dismissed the claim.

Mr. Yeltsin suffered three heart attacks in 15 months before undergoing a quintuple heart bypass operation Nov. 5, 1996, and his recovery was complicated by a bout of double pneumonia in January.

Mr. Yeltsin returned to centre stage later in the year, making numerous foreign trips, but appeared tired in recent overseas visits, notably in Sweden where aides were forced to explain a series of public gaffes.

Rifles seized in suspected Castro plot bought by exile leader

MIAMI (AP) — One of two sniper rifles seized in a suspected plot to kill Cuban President Fidel Castro was purchased by the president of a leading anti-Castro group, a newspaper reported.

Francisco Hernandez, the second-ranked official at the Miami-based Cuban American National Foundation, bought the weapon in 1994, the Miami Herald reported in its Sunday edition. The newspaper cited FBI records in its report.

The second rifle was bought by Miami exile Juan Evelio Pou, a veteran of the Bay of Pigs invasion, FBI records cited by the paper said. The two .50-calibre rifles, capable of firing flat-trajectory bullets over a kilometre, were seized by the U.S. Coast Guard on Oct. 27 aboard a Miami-based yacht carrying four Cuban exiles off Puerto Rico.

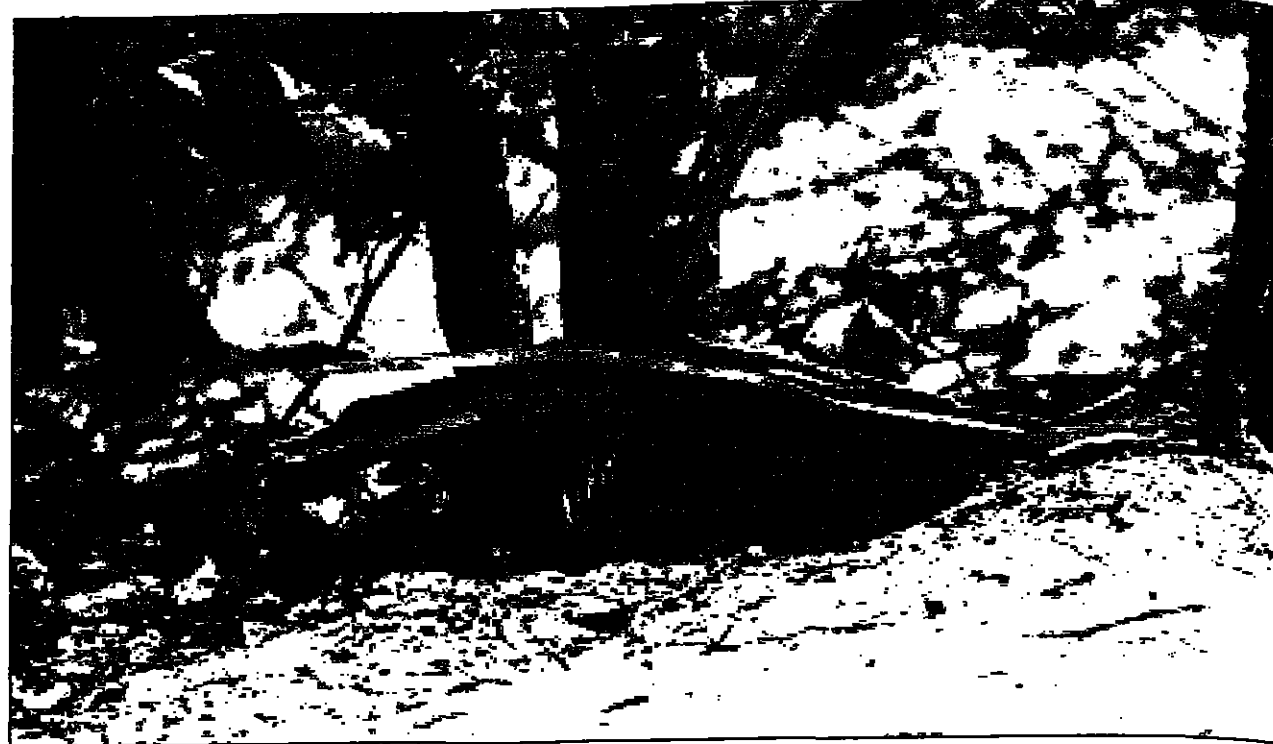
Agents also found ammunition and military supplies aboard the vessel, which had developed mechanical problems and began taking on water.

The four were charged with failing to report the guns. But a U.S. grand jury in San Juan is still investigating coast guard testimony that one of the exiles blurted out that the guns were to be used to kill Mr. Castro during a November summit meeting on the Venezuelan island of Margarita.

Although the Havana government has repeatedly accused the exile foundation and its members of financing armed attacks on Cuba, this is the first time a foundation official has been linked in an FBI investigation to an alleged plot against Cuba.

Mr. Hernandez ranks second in command behind Acting Chairman Alberto Hernandez, who took over leadership of the anti-Castro lobbying group following the death last month of founder Jorge Mas Canosa.

A spokesman for the foundation said Saturday he couldn't reach Mr. Hernandez and declined comment. Mr. Pou didn't return the Herald's telephone calls. Neither man has been charged in the case.



Debris lies on the ground near Dicos, at the site where the Ukrainian Aerosweet Yakovlev-42 jet crashed after disappearing Wednesday. After three days of search efforts in thick fog and snow, a Greek military helicopter sighted debris. Shortly before the discovery, Greek military sources reported the crash of one of its C-130 Hercules transporters involved in the search, killing all five crew members (AFP photo)

70 dead in Ukrainian plane crash in Greece

ANO MILIA, Greece (R) — All 70 passengers and crew on a Ukrainian airliner which crashed and burned at the foot of Mount Olympus three days ago were found dead Saturday.

"There are no survivors," Macedonia and Thrace Minister Filippos Pessalnikos told reporters. State doctors at the scene, which was strewn with body parts and toys wrapped for Christmas, said they were in the process of informing the relatives of the eight crew and 62 passengers killed.

Greek commandos who reached the site first earlier Saturday found bodies, wallets and toys on the snow-covered slope where the Russian-built Yakovlev-42 airliner crashed.

"The aircraft disintegrated upon impact and slid into a gorge," Deputy Defence Minister Dimitris Apostolakis told reporters at Salonika airport, where the

plane had been heading for. The plane vanished from radar screens during its second approach to Salonika Wednesday after a flight from Kiev Via Odessa with mainly Ukrainian and Greek passengers, including four children and four babies.

"The plane would have cleared the top had it flown about 100 metres higher," commander of operations, Lieutenant General Dimitris Dimou told Reuters.

The airliner belonged to state carrier air Ukraine but was being operated by Aerosweet airlines, a Ukrainian-Israeli concern, because their own Boeing 737-200 had a technical problem.

Transport Minister Tasos Mandelidis said after listening to a tape recording of a dialogue between Salonika's control tower and the plane that it appeared the pilot had become disoriented.

A senior officer at the

crash scene said lighting equipment was being brought in for the army to work through Saturday night and 10 armoured personnel carriers were expected to arrive with body bags.

"It's going to be a very long process," he said. The smell of kerosene hung in the air and pieces of cloth fluttered from snow-covered oaks and beech trees at 1,400 metres, where Mount Olympus meets the Pieria Mountains.

"There was a tremendous impact. Aside from the right wing and part of the cockpit there are just scattered pieces of debris," Gen. Dimou said.

The plane vanished late Wednesday but a search on foot by thousands of troops, civilians and aircraft was hampered by deep snow and thick fog.

"If the cloud cover hadn't lifted we would not have found the crash site," Mr. Apostolakis said. "It is such

a difficult site that the helicopter which first spotted it didn't want to leave, fearing it would not be able to find it again."

Convoys of army trucks and ambulances were rushing to the scene near the village of Fotina.

Relatives of passengers also hurried to Fotina and demanded to be taken to the site, but authorities placed it off-limits.

"We lost our relatives, we are in great pain. You must let us go to them," the uncle of one passenger pleaded with police.

Adding to the death toll, a Greek Air Force C-130 transport plane participating in the search crashed near Athens Saturday, killing five crew.

Locals saw the plane fly straight into a mountain at about 0730 GMT shortly after taking off from a military airport. The defence ministry said all aboard were killed.

Italian culture aims for world stage

ROME (AFP) — Italians are increasingly turning off the television and heading out to the country's cultural riches, Culture Minister Walter Veltroni said Saturday as he reported on a vintage year for Italian arts.

Next year could be even better, with the government bolstering its financial contribution and seeking to stage a return of the Italians to the international cultural scene.

In his first report on Italian arts, Mr. Veltroni told journalists: "1997 was a turning point for the world of Italian theatre" — and for culture more generally.

The minister reported an increase in audiences, most notably for dance and Italian cinema, and even a six per cent increase in jobs in 1997 in the realm of theatre, opera and concerts.

Despite an austerity budget to ensure Italy can meet the targets for joining the single European currency in January 1999, Mr. Veltroni said the government had selected culture as one of the country's strategic resources for investment.

He announced the culture ministry would increase its contribution to Italy's fund for the performing arts to 930 billion lire (\$534.5 million) in 1998. In 1996, the ministry's contribution was 750 billion lire.

Efforts will focus on securing co-productions in the world of cinema and Mr. Veltroni said he expected that a national agency would be set up in 1998 to promote Italian cinema.

The agency would be modelled on its French equivalent — but, said Mr. Veltroni, with clear commercial rather than political aims.

Collaboration with Latin America, particularly

Chile and Uruguay, is also expected in theatre and cinema.

In 1997, Italy clinched six co-production agreements with France and others are in the pipeline with England, Germany and Russia.

Already in 1997, the state made a major commitment to culture, according to Mr. Veltroni, which paid off as museum crowds increased by 15 per cent and television viewing figures fell significantly.

For the first time in 10 years, the number of cinema tickets sold exceeded 100 million in 1997 — compared with 96.5 million in 1996.

The larger audiences were increasingly watching European rather than U.S. films, according to a study commissioned by the culture ministry which found that U.S. productions represented only 49.3 per cent of the Italian market, compared with 72 per cent the year before.

While the number of Italian films produced shot up to 110 (37 more than the year before), the number of screens on which to watch them rose exponentially from 75 to 518.

The world of theatre also saw an increase in public and performances, this time on the basis of figures for 1995 and 1996. Overall figures for opera, dance, concerts and plays revealed an increase in the number of performances of 3.4 per cent, while audiences rose by 5.5 per cent. The biggest increase was in audiences for dance, which soared 25.6 per cent. Audiences for plays climbed a mere 0.2 per cent.

Mr. Veltroni said the results were the consequence of simplified bureaucracy and various incentives for the public such as reducing the price of cinema tickets.

Tony Blair is man of the year ahead of Mandela

LONDON (AFP) — Readers of a British newspaper voted Britain's Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair "man of the year", while Queen Elizabeth II came fourth in the women's poll, just ahead of Dolly the cloned sheep.

Some 3,000 readers of The Independent ranked Mr. Blair, who stormed to power in a landslide victory in May, over the South African President and anti-apartheid hero, Nelson Mandela, who came fourth.

Readers voted for personalities in three categories: man of the year, woman of the year, and worst person of the year.

Woman of the year was Mo Mowlam, the secretary of state for Northern Ireland, followed by her staunch left-wing colleague, the secretary of state for international development, Clare Short.

Mr. Blair's wife, the high-flying Queen's Counsel barrister Cherie Booth came third, while the nation's monarch slipped in just ahead of the year's woolly mascot, Dolly the first cloned mammal and former Irish President Mary Robinson.

Smacking slightly of chauvinism, readers ranked only five non-Britons in the best man category, although they were jostling for place in the worst person poll, with Saddam Hussein (third), Winnie Mandela (fourth) and Mike Tyson (10th).

Mr. Blair popped up again as the fifth worst person of the year.

Beating him to the top was former Tory minister and suspected Middle East arms dealer Jonathan Aitken, followed by Neil Hamilton, another Tory MP accused of dodgy dealings, with Harrods owner Mohammad Al Fayed.

The man who ousted Mr. Hamilton from his constituency in the general elections, former BBC correspondent Martin Bell, in his trademark crumpled white suit, came in second as man of the year, ahead of the brother of Diana, Princess of Wales, Earl Spencer, Nelson Mandela and Prince Charles.

'Flesh-eating' bacteria kills 10 in Uruguay this year

MONTEVIDEO (AFP) — The so-called flesh-eating bacteria Streptococcus A has claimed the lives of 10 people this year in Uruguay, a leading physician said in an interview published Saturday.

Homero Bagnulo, director of the Intensive Care Centre of the Hacia Hospital, told the La Republica daily that

"infection by this germ has become something relatively common."

Twenty cases of infection were reported in 1997, half of which ended in death in this nation of 3.2 million. The disease causes open lesions throughout the body and the infection can spread over the skin as fast as two centimetres per hour.

Jurists urge China to allow referendum in Tibet

GENEVA (AFP) — International jurists accused China Sunday of intensifying "repression" in Tibet and asked Beijing to authorise a U.N.-supervised referendum there on self-determination.

In a 365-page book, "Tibet: Human Rights and the Rule of Law," the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) said Tibetans had become a "people under alien subjugation" since Chinese Communist forces occupied the territory in 1950.

The ICJ, which is based in Geneva and groups jurists from many different judicial systems, said international law entitled Tibet to freely decide its political status.

"Since the beginning of 1996, there has been a further escalation of repression in Tibet," involving intensive political instruction in the monasteries, widespread use of torture against prisoners and a "total war" against the Dalai Lama, Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, the study said.

The commission calls upon China to hold discussions with the Dalai Lama, who resides in northern India.

The jurists also recommend that the U.N. Commission of Human Rights nominate a special rapporteur on Tibet.

U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan should also designate a special envoy to "promote a peaceful settlement and a United Nations supervised referendum to ascertain the wishes of the Tibetan people," suggest the jurists.

Such a referendum, to include Tibetans abroad, could point to the restoration of an independent state, to a real form of autonomy or to keeping the status quo, said the jurists.

ICJ Secretary General Adama Dieng said: "China has sought to suppress Tibetan nationalist dissent and extinguish Tibetan culture in order to maintain its alien and unpopular rule."

He added that "China has encouraged and facilitated the mass movement of ethnic Chinese populations into Tibet where they dominate the region's politics, security as well as the economy, thus colonising unwilling subjects."

Ethnic Chinese currently make up one third of the total population of all the Tibetan autonomous zones, compared to less than 10 per cent in 1949, the document said.

According to the ICJ, the number of political prisoners has risen to over 600, the majority of whom were arrested for peaceful protest.

A quarter to a third of these are Buddhist nuns, said the ICJ, adding that torture and mistreatment of detainees is commonplace.

"The use of electric cattle-prods on political detainees appears to be general practice. Women, particularly nuns, appear to be subject to some of the harshest and gender specific torture, including using electric cattle-prods," it said.

Many nuns and other political prisoners die unreported through torture or negligence.

Last year, 34 people were executed after death sentences were pronounced following often unfair hearings.

A "patriotic education campaign" obliged hundreds of monks to leave their monasteries and to condemn the Dalai Lama, who China considers as the cause of instability in the region.

The book acknowledged that while Tibet had experienced an improvement in its economy, health service and education, its cultural heritage has suffered drastically and its language has become marginalised.

It also noted that economic development in Tibet mainly benefited China while damage to the environment in Tibet was threatening the nomadic civilisation of its people.

Rio's airport plagued by bees

RIO DE JANEIRO (AFP) — First there were the black vultures, which Brazilian airport authorities eventually managed to scare away using fire-works.

Recently Brazil's terminals are being plagued by a new invader: aggressive bees that have swarmed into Rio's International Airport this week, delaying the departures of at least two aircraft.

The takeoff of a Boeing 767 was delayed Thursday because a swarm of the European bees had settled on the aircraft's nose.

The insects prevented work crews from pulling the American Airlines plane along the airport runway.

Firefighters eventually dispersed the bees by spraying the aircraft with streams of water, and the plane eventually was able to depart.

But the persistent insects then settled on the nose of another plane — this time an Air France plane. Firefighters again were called into action, and the 767 departure was delayed.

The problem, according to airportier Avilio Franco, is that worker bees leave the hive with their queen at this time of year to seek a new home.

"The nose of the aircraft was chosen as a temporary way-station," Mr. Franco said. "They would have remained there just long enough for the workers to find a permanent place," he said.

Last May, a black vulture crashed against the windshield of a Boeing 737 at the same airport, requiring the aircraft to abort its take-off.

Girl killed, police arrest woman with bloody knife

PETERBOROUGH, Ontario (AP) — Canadian police charged a woman with first degree murder after being called to a house in which a 14-year-old girl had been decapitated.

Police confirmed the decapitation after the autopsy was completed in Toronto Saturday.

Officers arriving at Adrienne Amikons' house in the Toronto suburb of Peterborough Thursday evening to investigate a noise complaint were met by a woman covered in blood, wielding a knife.

She cut a policeman's hand in the ensuing struggle with officers. Police later found the girl's body and her head in the house.

Jean Anne Rudski, 40, of Peterborough, was charged with first degree murder and remanded in custody until a court hearing Sunday.

Police said she spat on officers and cursed at everyone in the courtroom during her appearance Friday. They confirmed Rudski knew Amikons, but they won't discuss the nature of their relationship.

"We're trying to track the activities of both the victim and the accused on the day of the murder," Insp. Ray Vanderveelde said Friday.

Weeping friends and classmates gathered Saturday to remember the shy student and to place flowers on the lawn of the semi-detached home where Amikons was slain.

"She was very quiet and reserved," said Tom Jenkins, 14, who lives across the street. "You had to coax stuff out of her."

Peterborough's Aboriginal Community has set up a fund to help the girl's mother, Roberta Amikons, her 16-year-old daughter, and son, 9, deal with funeral costs.



Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic casts his ballot Sunday in the second round of Serbian presidential elections (Reuter photo)

Low turnout in first hours of Serbian poll

BELGRADE (AFP) — Serbian voters were slow to turn out in Sunday's runoff presidential poll where they were called on for a fourth time to elect a new president between Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's proxy and a far-right ultranationalist.

Milosevic's Socialist Party (SPS) candidate, Yugoslav Foreign Minister Milan Milutinovic, 55, faces ultranationalist Serbian Radical Party (SRS) leader, Vojislav Seselj, 43.

Unofficial estimates by the Students' Political Club, whose 200 observers have been monitoring the elections, showed that around 11 per cent of the registered 7.2 million voters have already cast their ballots by 11:00 a.m. (1000 GMT), four hours after the polls opened.

"An opinion poll last week tipped Mr. Milutinovic to beat Mr. Seselj."

In the first round on Dec. 7, Mr. Milutinovic won 43.7 per cent of the vote, against 32.19 per cent for Mr. Seselj, head of the SRS.

To secure election a candidate must win more than half the votes cast, and the turnout has to be over 50 per cent.

In the Dec. 7 poll, the turnout was 52.75 per cent. Serbia's top position was

left open in July when Mr. Milosevic, who was allowed to serve only two terms as president under Serbian law, had himself elected to the presidency of federal Yugoslavia, which groups Serbia and Montenegro.

After voting in the Belgrade residential quarter of Dedinje, Mr. Milosevic said he expected that "Milutinovic will finally win."

Attracting the voters to come to the polls was the main task for both candidates. If the required 50 per cent turnout could not be obtained, a third elections would have to be called in 60 days.

Mr. Seselj said he hoped the election would be completed Sunday.

"People are annoyed with such frequent elections. They want the electoral process to end," Mr. Seselj said after voting Sunday.

However, he said, if he would not be elected, "we will have new elections in the spring."

Mr. Seselj accused the Socialists of leading a negative campaign against him, saying that this was "a mistake," because if those "who are guilty for Serbia's economic breakdown are accusing someone that way, he is good choice for president."

The SPS has used the powerful state-controlled media to wage an aggressive campaign against Mr. Seselj.

Mr. Seselj retaliated by attacking Mr. Milutinovic, calling him "a man of poor qualities and small intellectual potential."

Meanwhile Mr. Milutinovic said he expected people to vote for him because a vote for him was "a vote for both Serbia and the world."

Mr. Seselj, who has been branded a "fascist" by U.S. diplomat Robert Gelbard, claims that his party "is strongly against any domination by world's powers."

If he wins, Mr. Seselj has vowed to tear up Belgrade's commitment to the Dayton peace accords in Bosnia-Herzegovina and move to integrate Serb-run areas in the former Yugoslav republic.

Yugoslavia still labours under limited economic sanctions maintained to ensure Belgrade's compliance with the 1995 Dayton accords and regional stability. The sanctions were imposed to punish Serbia's military support of the Serb insurgents in Bosnia.

Polling stations opened at 7:00 a.m. (0600 GMT) and were due to close at 8:00 p.m. The official results are expected by Dec. 25.

Japanese film director Itami dies in suicide leap

TOKYO (AFP) — Juzo Itami, whose social comedies gave Japan a new face in the world of cinema, died late Saturday in an apparent suicide leap from the top of an eight-floor building, police said Sunday.

"He apparently climbed over the fence of the roof. We have found no signs of foul play," a spokesman for the Metropolitan Police Department said.

The 64-year-old film director was found face-down in a pool of blood Saturday evening in front of the building which houses his office.

He was pronounced dead in hospital but his identity was not established until early Sunday.

Police said a suicide note was found in his office, but they have not disclosed its content.

His film credits include "The Funeral" (1984), "Tampopo" (1986), "Marusa No Onna" (Taxing Woman) (1987) and "Minbo No Onna" (The Anti-Extortion Woman) (1992), and the latest work "Marutaino Onna" (1997).

He was survived by his actress wife Nobuko Miyamoto and two sons. His younger sister was married to novelist Kenzaburo Ohe, the 1994 Nobel Literature Prize winner.

An official of Toho Co. Ltd., who identified Itami's body with Miyamoto, reportedly said his wife was in a state of great shock.

"We cannot think of any reasons why he could have want-

ed to kill himself. He was completely healthy," Takashi Nakagawa, Toho's public relations manager, was quoted as saying by Jiji Press.

Some reports said Itami had been romantically linked to a 26-year-old woman and planned to hold a news conference Monday to explain the situation.

A sneak shot of the couple was to be published in one of Japan's aggressive pictorial magazines this week, making them resemble victims of the sort of societal absurdities Itami could have focused on in his films.

Born in 1933 to a film director in the ancient city of Kyoto, Itami made his debut as an actor in 1960. He appeared in such foreign films as "55 Days in Peking" (1963) and "Lord Jim" (1965).

His career as a film director began in 1984 with "The Funeral," featuring comic sequences on the intricate ritual of a funeral in Japan. It proved to be a smash hit at home and later won wide acclaim abroad.

Itami continued to make successful movies, often featuring strong female characters, including a widow setting up a noodle shop, a female agent fighting tax evaders and a woman whose life is threatened by a religious cult.

His muse for much of his career was his actress wife Miyamoto who played all his female lead roles.

In his 1992 hit Minbo No Onna, he showed the influence of organised crime in

civil court cases, angering real-life gangsters. He was attacked, and seriously injured, by members of a knife-wielding gang.

One of the police officials who investigated the attack told Jiji: "He was such a strong man. He showed no signs of fear to us."

The gang attack inspired Itami to write and direct his last movie "Marutai-No-Onna".

This production featured an actress who witnesses a murder by a religious cult and testifies in court despite threats by the group to reveal her infidelity.

"The fiction is based on facts. In my case, many citizens helped me by testifying against the gang. Right in front of an array of gang cadres," Itami said in a magazine interview in October.

"I wanted to express my respect for them and put a courageous witness in the leading role."

He also confided to the Shukan Asahi weekly that he had several production ideas, including a movie about the doomsday cult Aum Supreme Truth which killed a dozen people in a nerve-gas attack on the Tokyo subway in 1995.

"I always have various works in preparation," he said. "A number of scripts have been done and I am doing research on a few more."

"I really want to work on the Aum incident, too. But it is still in court and television and distributing companies won't give me the go-ahead."

84 killed in Rwanda attack — news agency

KIGALI (AFP) — Clashes earlier this week near a transit centre housing refugees and at a nearby military camp in northwest Rwanda left 84 people dead, the independent Rwandan Information Agency reported Saturday.

State radio reported that Rwanda's Tutsi-dominated army had repelled the attack Thursday by Hutu rebels on the transit centre in Nkamba, hosting some 16,000 Tutsis from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) who survived a Dec. 10 attack on their nearby Mudende camp in which the death toll has been put at between 327 and 1,643.

The information agency, quoting an army spokesman, put the toll in the clashes at 50 rebels, 30 Tutsi civilians, two refugees and two soldiers killed.

"After encountering fierce resistance by the Patriotic Rwandan Army in the two attacks, the attackers turned on the Tutsi population near the camps and killed 30 of them," it said.

The U.N. refugee agency said the Nkamba camp had not been specially targeted by the

rebels. Pamela O'Toole, the spokeswoman in Geneva for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) told AFP the agency visited the area Friday and determined that the clashes occurred outside the transit camp.

She added that 30 trucks and several buses would be deployed to move the terrified refugees Sunday to a safer location in the northeast of the country.

The death toll from the Dec. 10 Mudende massacre remains unclear. The European Union Friday mentioned hundreds of dead and wounded, while a Rwandan Genocide Survivors' Association has said 1,643 were killed, and a U.S. special envoy on war crimes, David Scheffer, said after visiting the camp that 327 people were massacred.

The interior ministers of Rwanda and the DRC met Monday and vowed that the refugees would be repatriated or moved to a safer place. For the time being, however, they cannot be repatriated because of security conditions in the eastern DRC.

"Security in (the eastern DRC region of) Masisi is far from per-

fect, and the authorities are aware of anti-Tutsi sentiment that prevails in certain areas," a humanitarian source warned.

Last week's massacre dramatically stepped up the pressure to resolve ongoing ethnic conflict in the region that is catching thousands of refugees in the crossfire.

The Hutu extremists have frequently targeted civilians in their ongoing rebellion against the Tutsi-led government in Kigali, especially the Tutsi refugees who began arriving in camps in Rwanda during fighting in the former Zaire late last year when Laurent Kabila's military alliance launched its successful rebellion there.

Amnesty International said Friday it wanted to "shake the international community out of its indifference to the plight of the civilian population in Rwanda — and to highlight the fact that both (government) soldiers and armed opposition groups are responsible for grave human rights abuses."

The massacres of the past three months appear to be the largest-scale killings by both sides for at least two

years, Amnesty added. "Whatever the scale of atrocities committed by one side, they can never justify similar atrocities by the other," Amnesty said.

The European Union's special envoy for the Great Lakes region, Aldo Ajello, said after visiting Mudende that he had seen children who had been wounded by machetes.

"All this has nothing to do with war. It's purely and simply genocide,"

He said both legal and political remedies were needed to resolve the conflict, which has continued despite the advent of a Tutsi-led government in Rwanda that brought an end to the massive genocide of 1994.

"There can't be just a legal solution because there's no way to prosecute more than 130,000 people being held in Rwandan prisons," Mr. Ajello said.

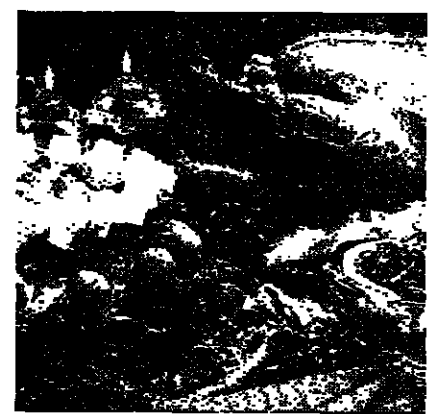
The detainees are awaiting trial for their part in the 1994 blood-bath, in which Hutu extremists slaughtered between half a million and 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

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Jordan Times

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Complicating matters

IT IS HARD to imagine what prompted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to insinuate Friday that the West Bank is part of 'Israel proper' except to further poison the atmosphere of peace talks with the Palestinians and throw yet another wrench into the wheels. Having just emerged from critical talks with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on projected Israeli redeployment from Palestinian territories and poised to hold 'make it or break it talks' with President Bill Clinton next month, the Israeli leader must have been thinking first and foremost of further appeasement of hardliners within his cabinet.

Surely, Prime Minister Netanyahu knows only too well that the West Bank is not part of Israel proper neither will it ever be. Had he seriously thought so he would have tried to annex the Palestinian areas. Those who advocate annexing the Palestinian lands do not remember the intifada or must also advocate genocide as a means of annexation. Without genocide, the creation of a bi-national state can only come on the ashes of the Jewish state according to the Israelis themselves, who have claimed over and over again that controlling the demographics of the state is the only way to insure its continuity. Thus, the only sane conclusion to draw is that the Israeli prime minister was at best not so serious when he said what he said or at worst was playing into the hands of the ultra-religious and ultra right-wing factions within his coalition.

Mr. Netanyahu's *raison d'être* behind his statement is that "there is no body of water separating the West Bank from Israel proper." It is not surprising to the world to have Netanyahu devise new international regulations to justify illogical theories, but what is interesting is that his new 'border law' can backfire if adopted by the other side. For one thing, what is more convenient than a 'water body theory' for those who advocate the liberation of Palestine from the river to the sea?

As for Netanyahu's other comment that the West Bank "is our backyard," the same goes for the neighbouring Arab states including the projected Palestinian state: Israel is the backyard of the Arabs! As for his characterisation of the West Bank as "not foreign land to us (Israel)," the entire territory known to Netanyahu as Israel, whichever that may be, is not foreign land to the Arab side, especially the Palestinians. There are still many monuments out there in former Palestine which Israel turned into 'national property' by sheer force.

Netanyahu would be better advised to stick to international law and resolutions adopted by the U.N. regarding Palestine and Israel. Before the United Nations set the borders of the Jewish state, Israel did not exist. Devising a new territorial regime could only work against the interests of his state, whose only hope for territorial peace is through the peace process which he has been knocking around.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Tareq Masarweh Sunday questioned the reasons or the wisdom behind a visit to Israel by two members of Parliament Hamadeh Fara'aneh and Mohammad Rafat. He said that in the first place the public demands to know if House Speaker Sa'd Hayel Srour permitted this visit to take place or whether the two deputies were encouraged by their colleagues. During the visit the two deputies met the speaker of the Israeli Knesset and other Israeli officials who, according to Masarweh, are supporters of the Netanyahu government and its policy of no Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories. Noting that the two deputies are Jordanians of Palestinian origin and represent the refugee camps of Bakaa and Al Hussein, Masarweh said the public wishes to know also if the people who elected them to Parliament approve of such a visit. The writer said these questions are on the minds of the public as the controversy over the visit gathers ground inside and outside Parliament. Masarweh demanded an explanation from the House speaker.

Al Ra'i's Mahmoud Rimawi said the meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries currently convening in Kuwait is facing important questions pertaining to these countries' relations with their closest neighbours: Iran and Iraq. For its part Iran has called for open dialogue with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for the sake of deciding the fate of the Arab islands occupied by Iran. According to Rimawi, this is a positive development which points to an easing of tension in the Gulf region. As for Iraq most of the Gulf leaders, particularly the UAE president, have demanded that something be done to ease the sufferings of the Iraqi people and that there is a need to prevent further military confrontation between the U.S. and Iraq so as to safeguard the interests of all the countries in the region including those of the GCC and Iraq and Iran, the writer said. While pursuing the path of peace with Iran, Masarweh said, the GCC leaders ought to accept and follow efforts that can lead to reconciliation with Iraq in order to avert future tensions and to pave the way for an end to the sufferings of the Iraqi people.

Economic Review

By Dr. Yusuf Mansur

Used clothing sales tear at local garment manufacturers

LAST WEEK, several newspapers addressed the demand for used clothes by different income groups in Jordan. The responses to the various questions posed by the interviewers underscored the fact that while the poor purchase second-hand clothes because of the incompressibility of their income levels with clothes prices, middle-income consumers did so in search of quality products. The used clothes market, hence, has become a substitute for the regular Jordanian clothes market and is thus creating a major problem for the garment industry.

The textile and garment industries in Jordan can hardly be viewed as significant economies of scale, which would be important for competing in the low end of the market, according to a research conducted recently by Surayya Sali. Approximately 200 of the 384 textile manufacturing enterprises in Jordan employ less than four workers each — total employment in textile manufacturing is 3,700. Thus, firms are small, and many of them fit even the very narrow Jordanian definition of a microenterprise. In addition, there are 1,500 garment manufacturers in Jordan that employ 7,200 workers with two-thirds of the enterprises employing less than four workers each. Again the size indicates that the industry is fragmented and could hardly be viewed as competitive.

Nevertheless, in 1995 total pro-

duction of textile and garments exceeded \$120 million (13.6 per cent of the total manufacturing output for that year), with exports accounting for 23 per cent of sales. Therefore, while a significant percentage of the industry suffers from being small, a good portion of production finds its way to outside markets and competes in price and quality. If the industry can export and compete outside Jordan, then it should also be able to compete at home. Why does it fail to compete with the used clothes market at home? The answer is that the relative quality-price combination of this industry is unable to compete fully in the domestic market.

The consumer is partly to blame for the state of the domestic market. The fact that a growing percentage of Jordanians favour stores that buy their products from clearance outlets in the United States or Europe shifts some of the blame to the consumer as lacking in sophistication. Local producers cannot sell at retail prices that compete with factory rejects, clearance and second hand products because these products were priced for clearing shelf space in other countries. A sophisticated consumer that demands the latest in fashion would usually opt for new clothes at high prices instead of waiting until they become outdated or out of season. These consumers are either very few or unable to find what they need at the regular retail outlets.

The producer, on the other hand, has to improve quality, which is not an easy feat. New standards have to be adopted that are commensurate with international ones. To achieve consistency in production and maintain quality, investment in human and physical capital has to increase, which can only be accomplished if the enterprise is large. In other words, the large Jordanian firms have to focus their production on the domestic market. As a result, many of the small firms will go under. However, quality would improve and prices would fall as scale economies are achieved. In fact, the increased concentration of the industry would benefit the industry itself as it progressively relies on a strong demand in the domestic market — as a rule, any industry that has a weak local market is vulnerable to fluctuations in the global market that are beyond its control and that are not easily predicted.

If the industry adjusts its structure and becomes more competitive, the used clothes market will become mainly a market for the very low income — as it was originally intended — which would increase the market share of the garment and textile industry in Jordan. Otherwise, used clothes that are good and cheap will drive out new clothes that are low in quality and high in price — this is a variant on Gresham's Law: "Bad money drives away good money."



Britain accused of harbouring Egypt's 'evil mastermind'

After the slaughter at Luxor last month, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak lashed out at Britain for "harbouring terrorists under the slogan of human rights" and Egypt published a list on the Internet of "wanted masterminds of terrorism." Steve Crawshaw hears what a "terrorist mastermind" has to say, and finds some strange ambiguities.

HIGH ON the Egyptians' hate-list is Yasser Serri, whose application for asylum in the U.K. is now being considered. Serri was convicted in his absence in Egypt in connection with the attempted assassination in 1993 of the prime minister, Atef Sedki, in which a young girl died. He is one of the main reasons why Egypt claims that Britain adopts a soft policy on terrorism.

Serri was no longer in Egypt at the time of the assassination attempt. He insists, too, that he was not involved in the attack from afar. "Mubarak feels no shame to do whatever suits him. It's a fabricated propaganda aimed at Great Britain. It's obvious that because Mubarak has failed in his internal policies, he wants to attract the attention of abroad."

He condemns the slaughter at Luxor, where 58 tourists died, while seeking to spread the blame. "I condemn the massacre in Egypt — and also the Egyptian regime which is

responsible for terrorist activities." He is happy to describe himself as an Islamic fundamentalist — reason enough for him to be anathema to the Egyptian government. He insists on his belief in Islamic Sharia law — and argues that this belief includes an abhorrence of violence. "As Muslims, we are not allowed to kill innocent people."

In Britain, Serri occupies a political no-man's land. He is under constant surveillance by Special Branch and MI5 — as potential suspect, and as potential victim. His Special Branch minders advised him to change his address for his own safety (in Serri's words: "Not because

we like you — but because we don't let these things happen here"). He insists that his Islamic Observatory Centre, which he runs from his flat, is only a "humanitarian and media platform," and does not raise funds for potential terrorist activities — which would become illegal under proposed new U.K. laws.

Egypt has repeatedly demanded that he be returned to Egypt in connection with his conviction in absentia. "Many times, the Egyptian government asked me to be transferred (back to Egypt). And many times, the British government refused. They kept saying: 'Give us evidence.'" The Home Office

refuses to comment on the details of Serri's case, beyond confirming that an application for asylum has been received.

Serri insists that he accepts the ambiguous terms of his stay in the U.K. He says it is right that both sides can be punished for a violent foul. "The British government is like the referee. They will give the red card to the Egyptian secret police — or to the fundamentalists. I respect that."

Certainly, the Egyptian security services are interested in gathering more information. At a recent anti-government demonstration at its embassy in Mayfair, besetted men with video cameras peered from behind the curtains, filming the crowd.

Nonetheless, Egyptian policy towards opponents of the regime remains mysterious. The Egyptian embassy in London has been in touch with Serri about the possibility of "opening a dialogue." The Independent has spoken to a go-between involved in the tentative approaches, which apparently included representatives of the Egyptian security services. Serri confirmed that the approaches had taken place, but claimed that Special Branch had told him to be wary. Egyptian officials deny that there have been any approaches. But it is clear that, when it comes to "terrorist masterminds," not all is as it seems.

The Independent

Human Rights File

The right to food gets wider recognition

By Waleed M. Sadi

THERE ARE rumblings within some of the U.N. bodies and specialised agencies about the U.N. Security Council's liberal application of the economic sanctions regime against countries. The plight of the Iraqi civilians, especially children, has given an added impetus to this growing complaint. UNICEF has recently highlighted the sufferings of Iraqi children in particular, albeit without directly challenging the Security Council's judgement or authority to slam economic sanctions against Iraq. The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) has also been making a clamour about the right to food and implicitly criticising any economic sanctions system that interferes with the enjoyment of this particular right.

Two weeks ago, the U.N. office in Geneva held a one-day seminar attended by representatives of various U.N. agencies as well as by the U.N. Human Rights Centre which highlighted the right to food as a basic right that needs to be taken into consideration when pursuing a national or international policy. The U.N. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which monitors the application of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) was also concerned with the right to food and other economic rights as spelled out in the covenant during its recent winter session in Geneva and adopted a position calling on the Security Council to be mindful of these rights whenever it feels obliged to apply sanctions against any country.

Due to the widespread ratification of the ICESCR, it is universally recognised as part of the customary international law that all nations, including those that have not ratified it, must observe and respect. While not challenging the authority of the council, or any other U.N. body for that matter, to adopt punitive measures against certain countries judged as violators of mandatory U.N. resolutions, the committee in question called on all these international bodies to respect and observe the rights stipulated in the covenant when deciding on any particular course of action. In other words, while the Security Council is a master of its rules of procedure and the final arbiter of the basis of its resolutions in carrying out its mandate to maintain international peace and security, the exercise of this authority is not free of all limitations or control.

The council's actions and resolutions must be in conformity with the U.N. Charter and the relevant international law. The sticking point in this context is the apparent absence of an independent authority with powers to make a binding determination on whether the council has exceeded its mandate by endorsing resolutions and measures that are contrary to the U.N. Charter and international law. The International Court of Justice could have been the ideal tribunal to adjudicate controversies and disputes arising from the council's alleged flouting of the charter and the various international treaties and conventions that are legally binding on states. But given the constraints on the court, as stipulated in its statute, it is doubtful that the controversy over the "legality of the Security Council resolutions and actions" can ever be addressed by the existing international tribunal.

The only remedy now available is to keep the council abreast of the jurisprudence of the various covenants on issues that could be relevant to its deliberations and decision making process. The U.N. Secretary General is duty bound to inform the council members of the jurisprudence of the various human rights committees on binding human rights instruments as well as those of the U.N. Specialised Agencies on matters that are relevant to the council's debates. The members of the council can also be invited to raise the opinions of these international bodies in an effort to assist the council to adopt positions that are consistent with binding international guidelines. Certain vulnerable groups of populations of states subject to sanctions are entitled to special protection. Children, the disabled, the sick and elderly people in particular must be immune from the negative effects of sanctions. The rest of the civilian populations also have rights, including the right to food, medicine, work, travel and housing which must not be jeopardised by any sanctions imposed on their country. To date the Security Council does not seem to be mindful of these basic rights when it decides to slam sanctions on states.

LETTERS

Avoiding showdowns

To the editor:

THE RECENTLY-concluded Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) summit in Tehran was an event of historic importance, attended in great harmony by most of the leaders of the Muslim World, an embodiment of the Koranic verse that "all Muslims are brothers." HRH Crown Prince Hassan's proposal at the OIC summit for setting up a Conflict Resolution Centre deserves appreciation from all Muslim leaders, and a commendation from every Muslim in the world.

Our part of this world would be more peaceful if conflicts between Islamic countries could be handled by resolution and peace-making by leaders from the brotherly countries not involved in the conflict. Can't we make such attempts to resolve the recent Qatar-Egypt and Yemen-Saudi Arabia conflicts? Or more serious ones that may arise in future. Things would have been much different for the Muslim world if the bloody and expensive Iran-Iraq and Iraq-Kuwait showdowns were avoided by diplomatic efforts by countries like Morocco, Pakistan, Egypt and Malaysia.

But, only if sanity and wisdom prevail among the leaders of the Muslim world. We should be grateful to Prince Hassan for promoting the idea and pray that it receives the acceptance and response it deserves.

Dr. Masud Ahmad Malik
 Swellah

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

Film censor allows a chink of light behind the veil

Iranians are flocking to see *The Snowman*, a film whose hero dreams of living in the United States and who, to secure a visa, dresses as woman in the hope of marrying an American. *Robert Fisk* finds Iran's film industry is breaking free of the censors.

ALMOST EVERY year since the 1979 revolution, Iran's film directors have won an international prize — but no thanks to the government. When Abbas Kiarostami wished to enter his *Taste of the Cherry* for the Cannes festival this year, the Ministry of Islamic Guidance delayed the film's export licence for so long that the reels only arrived in France after the festival had begun.

Incredibly, the story of a potential suicide vainly seeking help from friends and strangers to kill himself won the *Palme d'Or*. It was a slap in the face for the Iranian ministry but earned a peek on the cheek for Kiarostami from French actor Catherine Deneuve. When the director returned home in triumph to Tehran, he was forced to flee the airport to avoid outraged radicals who claimed he had breached Islamic morals by accepting a "bisc" from Ms. Deneuve.

Since President Mohammad Khatami's election last May, however, there are discreet signs that the lot of Iran's film-makers is improving. The *Snowman* was originally banned by the authorities but now it draws packed houses in Tehran, where its daring contents — the film includes pre-revolutionary songs — have prompted Iranians to ask whether new cultural freedoms may after all be on the way. Women are shown with little head-covering and the hero's cross-dressing in an attempt to find an American "husband" in Turkey astonished cinema-goers.

After four years of refusals from the Islamic Guidance Ministry, known by the single word "Ershad" (Guidance), Tahmineh Milani has just been given permission to make her film *Two Women*, a story of two female students at Tehran university during the revolution. One of the women is rich but untalented; the other poor but very intelligent; the wealthy student is successful, the poor woman fails. Social injustice, "the film" will say, "continued after the revolution."

Milani, a 37-year-old architect, is one of Iran's six women directors



Film director Abbas Kiarostami with Catherine Deneuve after receiving the *Palme D'Or* (photo by Popperfoto)

(there are about 200 male film-makers) but had received no authorisation to make a film since 1993. "There is a very good feeling in the industry that things are going to change," she says. "Of course, all of us voted for Mr. Khatami because we didn't want Mr. Nateq-Nouri [Khatami's conservative challenger] to get elected. I just thought he was the best among the candidates. It doesn't mean he's my ideal person and we cannot expect a miracle from him. But since he arrived, he's got rid of people in the Ershad who were very conservative and who were holding everyone back."

Cinema lovers should treasure the restrictions imposed on Iranian film directors last year by Ezzatollah Zarghami, a former army officer incongruously appointed deputy minister in charge of the cinema.

He decreed that in Iranian films there should be: no close-up shots of women; no foreign music; no clothes on women which showed the shape of their bodies; no ties or bow-ties, unless the wearers were depicted as being morally evil; no badly-dressed policemen or soldiers and no jokes about them; no physical contact between men and

women; definitely no kissing between men and women. By way of greeting, men could kiss each other (platonically, of course); no Islamic holy names could be given to bad characters; no film should be without a scene of men or women at prayer.

Zarghami was laughed out of office within months.

Milani has no time for those who look back with nostalgia on the pre-revolutionary Iranian cinema when, she says, sex, violence and cheap musical stories were pre-requisites for any successful movie. "After the revolution, for a period, things got better," Milani says. "Mr. Khatami ran the Ershad at that time. Later, things changed and the restrictions forced people to look for different things. When you take sex and violence out of a movie, you have to replace it with something else; you have to find some new meaning to entertain the audience."

Amid the swamp of war movies on the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, Milani wanted to make a picture which depicted "the power of war" and the way that it affected families. "When a man goes to war, it is his decision but when he gets

killed, it affects all his family. They are paralysed when a person in the family dies," she says. Milani visited the old war front at Qasr Shirin. The Ershad was not interested in such films.

If things are improving — and they appear to be — this is good news in a country where the cinema has often been the template of political change. No one has forgotten that it was a cinema fire in Abadan, killing more than 400 people, which provoked many of the anti-Shah street demonstrations in 1979. Milani is designing a new cinema for Tehran, along with her architect husband. President Khatami has appointed a film director, Seifollah Dad, whose *Lone Survivor* was filmed in Lebanon and depicted Palestinian women without Islamic head covering, as the new deputy minister of cinema.

Iranian films have won 30 awards in the last decade and bring in more audiences than imported Western movies. But then what else would you expect when almost all scenes involving women were cut from *Dances with Wolves*, *Marathon Man* and *The Last Emperor*?

The Independent

Smoking in schools The numbers are choking

By Richard Tanner

SITTING IN the staffroom, I picked up an essay about the effects of smoking. Apart from the lurid details of smokers' lungs, the increased heart disease and cancer risk, it was the statistics that caught my eye. The Ministry of Health says 70 per cent of men and 30 per cent of women are smokers; 20 per cent of Grade 10 smoke, rising to 30 per cent by Grade 12 and a whopping 70 per cent in university. Do these educated young people know what they're doing to themselves? The writer had confirmed the statistics by surveying her fellow Grade 12 students: 38 per cent of males and 23 per cent of females reported positively, a little above average.

Inhaling cigarette smoke is to unleash a fury of toxic chemicals into one's respiratory system. This causes bronchitis, the tar causes cancer, the carbon monoxide oxygen starvation (strokes and heart attacks) and the nicotine a high. The more one smokes, the less the high, so one smokes more and gets addicted; the lack of nicotine makes one irritable and depressed — the fasting taxi-driver syndrome.

Best never to get beyond the initial sickness that one's first few cigarettes bring for, as studies with heroin addicts have shown, giving up nicotine is harder than kicking heroin. Resisting the pressure of family or peers to try those first 2 or 3 cigarettes could be one's best decision in life. Especially for females because smoking retards foetus' growth, increas-

ing infant mortality, brain damage and heart disease.

So what is being done in school to educate children about these risks?

From a straw poll of students, I learnt that science and social awareness are in the forefront. Grade 7 students, who thought no one smoked in their year, knew of the dangers to heart and lungs from their biology lessons, and remembered something from school assembly.

Grade 9/10 students definitely knew a lot from their respiration studies in biology, and some recalled a programme with their group tutors.

Their year coordinator seemed to have stepped up the programme after learning of the pressures on her own child from his peers. Four sessions included worksheets, a video and even a scientific demonstration of deposited tar.

Grade 12 claimed little advice had been given, reflecting the lack of concern with smoking till recently. They felt that even raising the issue might damage a school's reputation and cautioned against hypocrisy by smoker-teachers.

Clearly, there have been changes in my five years in Jordan. Teachers don't smoke in front of children or in meetings now, and children are getting more meaningful advice. But a lot remains to be done.

Each school should conduct a survey of both the extent of smoking and the understanding of the risks smokers take, before planning a programme to address the results.

This should include students and parents, health workers and counsellors, so administrators and teachers get a real grasp of the situation. Without prejudging outcomes, it seems reasonable that punishment should include counselling and that advertising should be used — kiss a smoker, kiss an ashtray!

Whilst government surely knows what to do to prevent and reduce smoking — raise prices, ban smoking from public places, charge smokers double for hospital beds, etc. — and won't do it because it's a majority smoking house, advice for parents is not so easy. Even if parents smoke, and the statistics suggest most do, you can still warn of the dangers, and keep your cigarettes locked up with your sleeping pills.

Don't send the kids out to buy cigarettes and don't pretend the argilah is a safe way to smoke — my informant tells me it's 50 times more dangerous than a cigarette. If you smoke, try to reduce your intake by spacing your cigarettes or using nicotine patches — your children will admire your effort and help you.

Watch the group activities, for it's usually peer pressure that starts a smoker, in school or clubs, at parties or on trips.

And support your school's efforts or, if they're doing nothing, ask why not.

The writer, an ex-principal of a British school, is now teaching at Amman Baccalaureate School. He contributed the above article to the Jordan Times.

Ra'afat, Fara'aneh face Lower House scrutiny over 'private' visit to Knesset

(Continued from page 1)

for such visit."

"I do not regret undertaking this trip. I will continue my path despite all opposition," said Mr. Fara'aneh.

He told reporters that they have handed Mr. Tichon a list containing the names of Jordanian prisoners in Israeli jails and asked him to mediate to secure their release.

Mr. Fara'aneh said that he and Mr. Ra'afat also called on Israeli parliamentarians to exercise pressure on Mr. Netanyahu to implement agreements signed with the Palestinians, especially concerning Israeli army redeployment from the West Bank.

Mansour Murad, a lawmaker from Zarqa, said that the meeting of Jordanian deputies with Israeli lawmakers was unjustified. "We are not against anybody who wants to visit his native home or to pray in Jerusalem," said Mr. Murad. "But we are against any meeting with Israeli parliamentarians."

"This is a step in the path of normalisation of ties with Israel which most Jordanians are opposed to," said Mr. Murad.

Meanwhile, Baqa'a refugee camp leaders told the Jordan Times that a rally will be held soon in the camp, a home to more than 120,000 refugees, to protest against the visit.

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Iraq diverting trade from Jordan to UAE and Syria, Baghdad traders say

Iraq says trade ties with Jordan to expand in 1998

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq said Sunday that its trade ties with Jordan would expand in 1998 despite a row between the two neighbouring countries over the hanging of four Jordanians in Baghdad.

"There is no change of policy towards Jordan... On the contrary we are going to increase our trade with Jordan," Iraq's Trade Minister Mohammad Mehdi Saleh said in a news conference in Baghdad.

Iraq's hanging of four Jordanians this month on charges of smuggling prompted Jordan to expel seven Iraqi diplomats in retaliation.

Mr. Saleh gave no further details but said he had agreed with Jordanian officials to increase the volume of goods reaching Iraq via Jordan's Red Sea port of Aqaba.

Since the 1991 Gulf War over Kuwait — in which Amman sympathised with Baghdad — Iraq has been exporting 75,000 bpd to Jordan part of which is charged at market prices and the rest at undisclosed concessionary terms.

Jordan's oil purchases from Iraq are exempted from U.N. sanctions banning Iraq from exporting its oil as a punishment for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The United Nations allowed Baghdad in December 1997 to sell \$2 billion worth of oil over six months to buy food and medicine for Iraqis. Jordan has been supplying Iraq with various goods under the oil deal.

Meanwhile, Iraq has diverted most of its private trade from Jordan to the United Arab Emirates and Syria, Baghdad traders said.

Iraqi shopping centres are brimming with goods imported from Syria and the Emirates, particularly from the emirate of Dubai where Iraqi businessmen have set up more than 100 trading companies.

The two countries have overtaken Jordan as Iraq's main trading partner, Iraqi traders said.

A sizeable portion of the Syrian and Dubai

goods fall within the category of humanitarian supplies allowed under the U.N. trade sanctions imposed after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Most of the flour, rice, cooking oil and sugar on Iraq's spot market comes from Dubai, one trader said.

Ready-made clothes and fruits are imported from Syria.

Iraq and Syria have restored the trade relations that were severed in the early 1980's when the Syrian government sided with Iran in its 1980-88 war with Iraq.

UAE is the most outspoken supporter of Iraq among the Arab Gulf states. Its president, Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan, has publicly called on his Gulf counterparts to forgive Iraqi President Saddam Hussein for the Kuwait occupation and allow him to rejoin the Arab fold.

Baghdad traders said they now find it easier to conduct business with Dubai, the Gulf's main trading centre, than with Jordan, Iraq's main outlet to the outside world.

"Car parts, dry batteries, gold jewelry, tyres and even some oil products like lubricating oils we now get from Dubai," said another trader who refused to be identified.

Trade figures are not available, but the U.N. office in Baghdad confirmed Iraq was trying to import more from Dubai and Syria under the oil-for-food programme. The scheme allow Iraq to sell a limited

amount of oil on condition the proceeds are spent on humanitarian goods.

U.N. spokesman Eric Falt said Iraq's imports from Syria were expected to rise. Two contracts worth \$17 million have already been approved by the United Nations under the programme, he said.

Iraq has already imported \$45 million worth of goods from the emirates, Mr. Falt said.

In Karrada, Baghdad's main thoroughfare, jewellers' shop windows sparkle with gold ornaments imported from Dubai, the world's largest gold center.

Most of the watches, light bulbs and electrical equipments available in Baghdad have come from Dubai.

Goods from the emirates arrive mostly via small boats which manage to slip past the U.S. marines enforcing U.N. sanctions in the Gulf.

"When the Marines intensify inspection and surveillance, we try to shift imports to the Jordanian port of Aqaba, rather than (Iraq's southern port of) Umm Qasr," a trader said.

But traders said the United Nations had installed monitors in the port of Aqaba.

"We are less and less reliant on Jordan," said a Baghdad supermarket owner. "They (the Jordanians) are sometimes tougher than Americans in applying sanctions on us," he said.



A GROUP of Italian journalists spent two days at the Hotel Intercontinental Jordan as part of their familiarisation trip to Jordan. Eight journalists visited Jordan by invitation from the Italian Tourism Agency Rallo Viaggi as part of their task to promote Jordan. Petra was their second destination after Amman.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Ministry of Transport Privatization of the Aqaba Railway Corporation Request for Expressions of Interest

The Government of Jordan is seeking expressions of interest for firms to operate the Aqaba Railway Corporation (ARC) under a concession agreement.

ARC is a state-owned company that provides rail service from phosphate mines owned by the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC) at Abiad and Hassa, and Shidiya for export through the port at Aqaba. The mine at Shidiya, is not presently served by rail, and rail service is provided via a transshipment facility.

The concession will include:

- operation and maintenance of ARC;
- financing and construction by the concession of a rail extension to the JPMC mine at Shidiya, under a BTO arrangement (build, transfer and operate); and
- investment in upgrading and overhaul of locomotives and wagons.

Construction of the extension and improvements in operations and equipment will make at least 5 million tonnes of phosphate available to be moved by rail per year, compared with the present level of 2.5-3.0 million tonnes per year.

The Government is also considering including as part of the concession, the financing, construction, and operation of a rail link between Aqaba and the Aqaba Industrial Area (Wadi II), which will require additional investment by the concession. This extension will increase the traffic available by an estimated 3.5 million tonnes.

An efficient ARC is vital to the competitiveness of JPMC, one of Jordan's major exporters, therefore the Government is looking for experienced railway operators, with financial capability to undertake this project. The Government is seeking expressions of interest from firms or consortia with the following operating and financial capabilities:

- a) average annual turnover (defined as works in progress and completed) over the last five years of US Dollars 100 million equivalent, and;
- b) successful experience in the development, implementation and operation (including procurement of rail equipment, provision of maintenance services, and overall management) of heavy railway freight trains.

If your firm or consortium meets these conditions, we would be pleased to receive an indication of interest, accompanied by a statement of your qualifications and capabilities.

It is the intention of the Government to conduct a competitive bidding process for the selection of the concessionaire. We will review the expressions of interest received and prepare a short list of candidates for the next Stage which will involve the submission of Technical Proposals by candidate firms or consortia. An announcement of the short list will take place early in 1998.

The implementation of the concession is the responsibility of the Ministry of Transport which has engaged CPCSC Transcom Ltd. to assist in the matter.

Please forward your expressions of interest no later than January 25, 1998, to the attention of:

Mr. Yahia Jdaitawi
Director of Railway Department
Ministry of Transport
Government of Jordan
P. O. Box 35214
Amman 11180
Jordan
Tel: 962-6-5518111
Fax: 962-6-5527233

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1997

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You're agitated, your partner's agitated, the boss is pacing around, the whole bunch of you are on edge. This could be exciting, actually. When you're in this kind of a mood, you just have to make something happen. Push for something you've been afraid to try.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) There are letters to write and phone calls to answer. You'd rather be driving somewhere to meet clients, or even just to be by yourself. If you could have taken today off, you'd have done it. If you still can, do so. But first, answer those important messages.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) This is a good day for romance. You've got so many appointments, however, it's not easy to get together for dinner. Make a phone call. You and your sweetheart need to stay in touch mentally even if you have trouble getting together physically.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) There are lots of things going on. You want to stay in control of the situation, but you may not quite know how. Having a good partner helps. Accept the support of a roommate or family member. Together, you'll get through it all just fine.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) There's a lesson to be learned today, having to do with your mate. This person is trying to explain something to you. You want to be doing the teaching. Relax. He or she may actually know something you don't. This could turn out to be fun.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You want to buy pretty gifts to delight your friends and loved ones. Be careful, if you're on a limited budget. You can go through a lot of money in a short time. They love what you get them, but stay out of debt. They like you for yourself. The best ones do, anyway.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You are very busy, so it's difficult to spend much time at home. That's even more true during the holiday season. Somebody needs your attention tonight, however. Take care of this situation before you go on to anything else. Otherwise, it'll be a worse mess when you get back to it.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You might be able to put off returning the calls until tomorrow, but you won't have much longer than that. Why not spend some time figuring out what you want to accomplish? If you have a plan before you start, your chances of success are increased.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You've got a clear shot at success first thing this morning. Make a bold move then. Later, there could be a hassle. Something you want to do with your buddies conflicts with something your sweetheart had in mind. Stay cool and you can do it all.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) A strong authority figure wants to boss you around. If this person signs your paycheques, consider cooperation. Don't get into an argument. The size of your annual bonus is inversely proportionate to the size of your ego. To win, give up being right.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) If work interferes with travel, perhaps you can find adventure in another way. You shouldn't have to fit into a set routine. You do better when your creativity is constantly being stimulated. Use it now, to make that happen.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) This is a wonderful day for buying beautiful items. This close to the holidays, things have been picked over pretty well. You want nothing but the best, and that's expensive. Well, don't rack up a Visa bill that's bigger than the national debt. Use wit instead.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

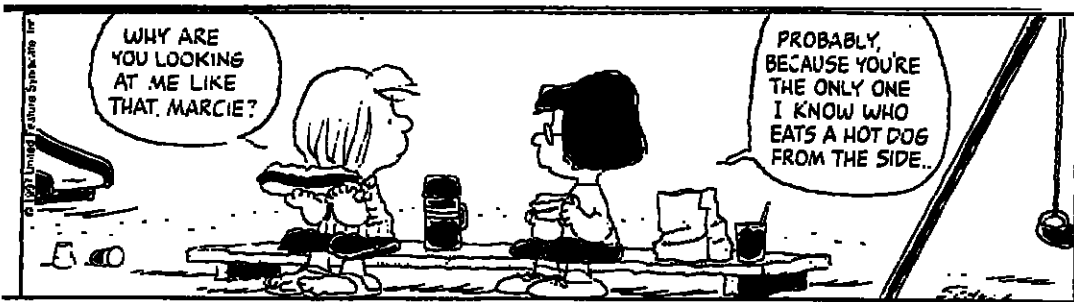
ACROSS

- 1 G-sharp
- 6 Metal fasteners
- 11 Game counter
- 14 Ex-Yankee Boyer
- 15 Nice good-bye
- 16 Point of praise
- 17 Attempt
- 19 Guy's date
- 20 Just get by
- 21 H.S. sub
- 22 Dreary environments
- 24 Get steamed
- 26 Scatter randomly
- 28 Bunker, e.g.
- 30 Rogue church member
- 33 Deck-crew leader
- 36 Dueling swords
- 38 Late slither?
- 39 Guessed figs.
- 40 Kine or Bacon
- 41 Champagne bucket
- 42 Sun Devils sch.
- 43 Waldheim and Weil
- 44 Pretended
- 45 Portuguese island group
- 47 Synthesizer mixer
- 49 Jai alai ball
- 51 Simileons
- 55 Small hills
- 57 Coll. sensor's exam
- 59 Santa ... wands
- 60 In working order
- 61 Camel character
- 64 Half a fly
- 65 Hooper's youngster
- 66 White poplar
- 67 Car's rear end?
- 68 Peter, the director
- 69 Affirmative responses

DOWN

- 1 Post-workout wops
- 2 Snow unit
- 3 Embankment
- 4 Goddess of criminal folly
- 5 Faculty protest
- 6 Bigotry
- 7 Second president
- 8 Bro or sis
- 9 Vegetable color?
- 10 Army-post merchants
- 11 Bouncing toy
- 12 Paraffin-coated cheese
- 13 Solidifies
- 18 Cartoonist Silverstein
- 23 Have debts
- 25 In this way
- 27 Belief in God
- 29 Ogile
- 31 Words of comprehension
- 32 Braided string
- 33 Smile expansively
- 34 Pile Polon on ...
- 35 One-down four-up card game
- 37 Pers.
- 40 "Seven Samurai" director
- 41 Othello's nemesis
- 43 Party pooper
- 44 Walker's path
- 46 Conger's catch
- 48 Actor Sharif
- 50 Edward, the dramatist
- 52 Shokstrings
- 53 Leg joint
- 54 Isaac, the singer
- 55 Smth, the singer
- 56 Winning margin
- 58 Matched collections
- 62 Del-sandwich letters
- 63 U.K. honor

Peanuts



Andy Capp

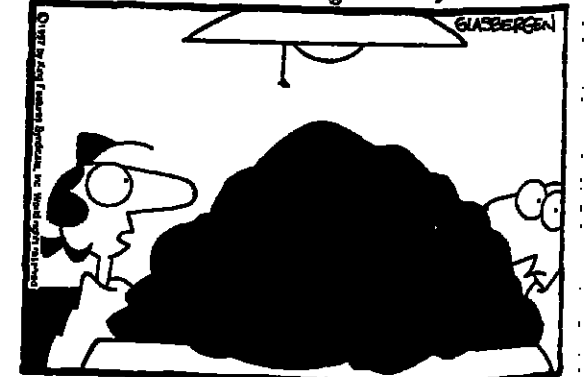


Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF

By Glasbergen



JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

RALUR

INLOG

DOVNER

INDAYT



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here: _____

Yesterday's Jumbles: SHAKY TASTY EMBARK JOCKEY

Answer: When it comes to contests her dessert does this - TAKES THE CAKE

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Study envisages transforming Royal Jordanian into a holding entity, forming new company to handle commercial flights

**** FINANCE MINISTER Suleiman Hafez** has revealed that, according to a study, the Royal Jordanian airline is likely to be transformed into a holding entity and that a new airline company would be affiliated to it. Jordanian, Arab and foreign investors will be investing in the new airline company within a restructuring operation of the Royal Jordanian, the minister said.

In a lecture he delivered at the Al Faiha Club, Mr. Hafez indicated that the new company will not have any obligations carried by Royal Jordanian. He clarified that the debts of the Royal Jordanian will be worked out between the airline and the government. The minister did not provide any details about the capital of the new company or about the identity of the major investors because such matters were still under study.

However, Mr. Hafez said the new company, as a subsidiary, will have the right to operate and sell the Royal Jordanian routes. He added that, according to a preliminary study conducted by the World Bank to examine means of remedying the situation of the Royal Jordanian and to provide technical expertise, the subsidiary which is affiliated to the holding company will conduct commercial flights.

The World Bank study includes selling all non-essential operational activities that have nothing to do with commercial

flights such as supplies, maintenance and the duty free shop. Proceeds from selling these functions should be used to cover the overdraft of Royal Jordanian and all loans that have become due.

According to the study, the holding company (Royal Jordanian) will remain under the supervision of the state with the possibility of maintaining a relatively large share in all the companies that will be established and sold to the private sector after transferring the services and operations to them.

Private sector sources said that Saudi Prince Al Waleed Bin Talal is considering an equity in the subsidiary which the financial advisor to the prince estimated will have no less than \$500 million in capital.

The sources added that Royal Jordanian is looking for a strategic partner to join in a wide-ranging privatisation plan being prepared. The plan would split the operational functions from commercial flight activities and settle loans in excess of \$500 million.

Mr. Hafez said that in the light of the study, which will be more legal, the government will decide during the coming months on the percentage that it will sell of its equity in the Royal Jordanian. The decision will include the distribution of shares that will be bought by investors from the private sector (Al Aswaj).

Jordan seeks investors to rehabilitate, operate the Aqaba Railway Corporation

By Ahmad Al Khatib
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan is offering local and foreign investors a 25-year concession for rehabilitating and operating the Aqaba Railway Corporation (ARC) as part of an ambitious privatisation scheme, officials said on Sunday.

The Ministry of Transport said in a recent ad it was inviting local, Arab and foreign investors to submit expressions of interest by Jan. 25.

The officials said the short-listed firms will be selected early next year, after which they will have to submit technical proposals for the \$94 million plan.

The transport ministry said in the newspaper ad that it was looking for "experienced railway operators" to run the project that involves major expansion work to double the rail's capacity and modernise the link.

It said it was "seeking expressions of interest" from firms and consortia with an average annual turnover of \$100 million over the last

five years and experience in developing and running heavy railway freight trains.

A senior government official said the concession will include operation and maintenance of the ARC, financing and constructing a rail extension to the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC) mines at Shidiya, under a BTO agreement (build, transfer and operate). He also said it included upgrading and overhauling existing locomotives and wagons.

The state-run ARC provides rail services from phosphate mines owned by JPMC at its southern sites of Abiad, Hassa, and Shidiya for export through the Red Sea port of Aqaba. But Shidiya mine is not served by rail and the service is provided by a transshipment facility.

The government, the official said, was also considering plans to finance, construct and operate a rail link between Aqaba and the Aqaba industrial area (Wadi I) in the concession. The \$32 million extension will increase the traffic available

by an estimated 3.5 million tonnes.

Overall construction and extension works and improvements in operations and equipment will allow the transfer of at least five million tonnes of phosphate per year, up from between 2.5 to three million tonnes a year now.

"The government intends to conduct a competitive bidding process for the selection of the concessionaire," said the ad. "We will review the expressions of interest received and prepare a short list of candidates for the next stage which will involve the submission of technical proposals by candidate firms or consortia."

Exports of phosphate and potash provide the Kingdom with a main source of hard currency.

Officials said privatisation of the ARC was expected to be over by the year 2000. They have not ruled out including the JPMC, the Jordan Potash company and other fertiliser plants as partners in the new company that will run the railway.

Jordan bourse in window dressing ahead of year-end

AMMAN (R) — Jordan's bourse eased on Sunday in year-end book-squaring deals undertaken mainly by banks to prop up portfolio valuations ahead of year-end closing, dealers said.

They said banks were engaged in window-dressing block trade transactions to raise prices ahead of year-end closing for 1997 evaluation purposes of their stock portfolios, dealers said.

"Many banks are tidying up their accounts and want to push closing prices higher by year-end," said one broker.

Another broker said mainly local portfolios were involved in artificial deals to post gains for year-end accounts.

"It's mostly banks which are making artificial gains at certain prices to attain gains or losses in their books," said broker Husam Al Hanbali.

The official 60-share Amman Financial Market index fell 0.55 per cent to 168.28 points in large turnover of JD2.5 million (\$3.5 million) dominated by a handful of block sales.

Three block trades in Arab pharmaceutical manufacturer,

Arab Potash and Union Chemicals and vegetables alone accounted for over half the daily volume.

Apha dropped JD0.03 to JD4.17 in the largest block deal worth JD500,444 followed by Apot which shed 0.15 per cent to 6.05 dinars in the second largest transaction worth JD400,960.

Aside from these major transactions the market remains thin in across the board poor activity still reeling under the impact of negative factors weighing down on sentiment.

Brokers cite lack of demand, shortage of liquidity and an absence of foreign interest.

Foreign interest in Jordan's stock market has diminished since the end of a global fund buying spree on blue-chips last June which helped fuel a brief market rally.

The private pearl index of the 45 best-performing shares in terms of turnover and performance rose 0.11 per cent to 83.18 points, still 0.25 per cent down from the start of the year.

REUTERS The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLS	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.7784	0.8001	1.4380	129.41	1.4321	1744.95	2.0040	5.8647
DE Mark	0.5623	-	0.3371	0.8092	72.76	0.8050	980.92	1.1269	3.3479
GB Sterling	1.6554	2.9650	-	2.3811	214.89	2.3865	2907.78	3.3395	9.9229
CH Franc	0.6949	123.80	0.4165	-	89.89	0.8945	1211.77	139.20	4.1352
JP Yen	0.0077	1.3737	0.4633	1.1115	-	1.1062	13.48	164.80	4.5996
CA Dollar	0.6983	1.2511	0.4265	1.0118	1.11	-	1226.85	1.4082	4.1867
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0188	0.3435	0.8824	1350.26	0.8204	-	11.48	3.4114
NL Guilder	0.4890	88.70	0.2991	71.89	64.82	0.7143	870.30	-	2.9698
FR Franc	0.1579	0.2886	0.1007	24.1617	21.71	0.2405	33.65	33.6500	-

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLS	FRF
US Dollar	-	0.7080	3.7504	0.3770	3.6400	0.3048	3.6228	1522.50	3.3950
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	-	6.2897	0.5317	5.1340	0.4299	5.1803	2147.38	4.7884
Saudi Riyal	0.2665	0.1890	-	0.1005	0.87	0.0813	0.98	405.96	0.9052
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8805	0.9480	-	9.68	0.8095	9.74	4038.46	9.0053
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	1.0303	-	0.0937	1.01	418.27	0.9327	-
Kuwait Dinar	3.2808	2.3261	12.3045	1.2368	11.94	-	12.05	4896.08	0.9327
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0211	0.1026	0.9911	0.0830	-	414.53	0.9244
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4657	2.4633	0.2475	2.3908	0.2002	2.4123	-	2.2299
Egyptian	0.2945	0.2088	1.1047	0.1110	1.0722	0.0898	1.0818	448.45	-

Energy		Oil: Last	Previous
Brent	17.43	17.67	-
W. Texas	18.43	18.48	-
Bonny	17.43	17.57	-
Dubai	15.10	15.40	-
UL Gas	173.00	171.00	-

Mid-East Currencies					
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2665	0.4743	0.16001	0.38387	34.5185
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.48438	0.16338	0.39205	35.2485
KW Dinar	3.2808	5.83771	1.96889	4.72367	424.809
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.71921	1.58185	3.81971	343.407
CY Pound	1.9125	3.4012	1.147	2.7521	247.497

Metal Prices		Gold (oz's)	Silver (oz's)	Platinum (oz's)	CU (3 Months)	Zinc (3 Months)	Lead (3 Months)	NI (3 Months)
Gold (oz's)	289	289.5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Silver (oz's)	6.05	6.06	-	-	-	-	-	-
Platinum (oz's)	355.5	357.5	-	-	-	-	-	-
CU (3 Months)	1543	1546	-	-	-	-	-	-
Zinc (3 Months)	1782	1787	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lead (3 Months)	1136	1141	-	-	-	-	-	-
NI (3 Months)	550	554	-	-	-	-	-	-

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)					
Period	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	1 Year
USD	5.81	5.81	5.78	5.84	5.87
GBP	7.31	7.59	7.61	7.55	7.55
JPY	0.24	0.29	0.21	0.28	0.30
DEM	3.62	3.68	3.58	3.87	3.93
FRF	3.47	3.57	3.65	3.73	3.81
CHF	1.24	1.34	1.43	1.56	1.62
ITL	5.97	6.86	5.59	5.27	5.10

Energy			Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/bs)	169	Spot	-	-	-
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1708	Spot	-	-	-
Sugar (\$/ton)	301.6	Spot	-	-	-
Wheat (\$/ton)	109	Spot	-	-	-
Soy (c/bs)	25.01	Spot	-	-	-
Tea (\$/kg)	165	Spot	-	-	-
Barley (\$/bsh)	0	Spot	-	-	-
Rice (\$/ton)	370	Spot	-	-	-

JOD Cross Rates			Currency	Buy	Sell
USD	0.708	0.710	US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1907	1.1896	GB Sterling	1.1907	1.1896
DE Mark	0.3978	0.3988	DE Mark	0.3978	0.3988
CH Franc	0.4816	0.4841	CH Franc	0.4816	0.4841
FR Franc	0.1188	0.1194	FR Franc	0.1188	0.1194
JP Yen	0.0466	0.0463	JP Yen	0.0466	0.0463
NL Guilder	0.383	0.3548	NL Guilder	0.383	0.3548
IT Lira	0.4049	0.4069	IT Lira	0.4049	0.4069

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - JORDAN											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 21/12/1997											
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
346,000	249,000	ARAB BANK	15.1	1.22	4	80	26290	329.00	328.00	1.00	
N	2,340	1,680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	8	0.00	32	15412	27766	1.81	1.80	-0.01
	3,600	1,800	BANK OF JORDAN	6.3	0.00	4	1250	2415	1.90	2.00	-0.10
	1,200	890	MID. EAST INV. BK.	75.5	0.00	1	500	575	1.12	1.15	-0.03
S	2,680	1,730	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.4	6.03	6	1550	2691	1.74	1.73	-0.01
	5,300	4,600	THE HOUSING BK.	15.4	3.77	6	10346	53282	5.15	5.15	-
	4,180	1,850	JOR. KUNAFAT BANK	10.6	0.00	8	17062	34119	2.00	1.99	-0.01
+	980	690	JOR. GULF BANK	3.9	10.61	16	25650	17001	.69	.66	-0.03
+	4,050	2,380	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	12.2	4.00	48	17529	41124	2.43	2.40	-0.03
+	1,530	1,300	UNION BK. SAV. INV.	P	0.00	1	5000	5450	1.10	1.09	-0.01
	1,840	870	BEIT AL-NAL (BEITHA)	P	16.30	3	1250	4812	.88	.92	-0.04
S	4,990	2,500	ARAB BANKING CO.	20.9	0.00	1	200	578	2.75	2.89	-0.14
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 234.45 %CHG: -0.23 130 95029 211701											
+	1,740	910	ARABIAN SEAS INSUR.	8.2	0.00	1	2000	1800	.91	.90	-0.01
+	4,250	3,800	JERUSALEM INSUR.	10.6	5.13	1	200	780	3.95	3.90	-0.05
	2,100	1,950	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.6	7.50	3	1250	2500	2.01	2.00	-0.01
	2,350	1,620	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	8.1	4.78	2	2000	3850	2.00	1.99	-0.01
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 117.42 %CHG: -0.76 7 5450 8930											
	2,050	1,550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.3	5.21	19	36335	70453	1.94	1.92	-0.02
	3,410	2,450	BIRKEN MINERALS	16.9	4.66	1	200	670	3.41	3.35	-0.06
+	7,500	3,750	VECLAS. OWNERS FED.	8.6	4.44	1	50	197	3.75	3.94	.19
	6,100	3,550	ARAB INTL. HOTELS	12.5	4.90	1	200	816	3.89	4.08	.19
	1,550	930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	4	1500	1630	1.09	1.08	-0.01
	810	470	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	28.2	0.00	8	7100	3905	.56	.55	-0.01
	9,900	6,700	ALFA 1	15.0	5.97	8	20400	169189	8.36	8.38	.02
T	1,680	1,150	MID. EAST HOTELS	18.6	0.00	24	216600	262091	1.21	1.22	-.01
	3,900	2,890	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	10.3	0.00	34	24812	97674	3.88	3.95	.07
	1,050	740	JORDAN EXHIB. INV.	9	0.00	2	3000	3610	.95	.95	-
	1,090	900	SARMA EDUCATION	9	0.00	3	950	896	.95	.94	-0.01
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 111.28 %CHG: +1.25 105 311947 611301											
T	1,150	930	ATTARQUEES	9	0.00	3	1750	2030	1.15	1.16	-.01
+	4,450	2,980	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	19.7	3.77	27	11135	32844	2.98	2.92	-0.06
	7,050	5,270	ARAB POTASH CO.	14.7	3.16	8	65200	400960	6.20	6.05	-0.15
	11,160	9,900	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.0	8.60	18	5845	60506	10.35	10.33	-0.02
	6,700	4,500	JORDAN TANNING	7.2	7	2100	12406	5.85	5.90	.05	
	3,150	1,300	INDUSTRIAL COM. AGR.	9	0.00	5	750	1058	1.47	1.41	-0.06
	4,700	3,440	ARAB PHARM. MANUF.	11.5	4.80	49	181998	500444	4.20	4.17	-0.03
	2,940	2,200	JORDAN DAIRY	9.5	8.70	2	139	591	2.80	2.81	.01
	1,550	1,020	JOR. TYPES MANUF.	16.6	5.97	3	378	5048	1.34	1.34	-
	2,800	1,800	GENERAL MINING	9	0.00	1	300	570	1.90	1.90	-
	6,000	4,400	DAR ALDAMA DV. INV.	14.1	4.35	9	7250	41638	5.71	5.75	.04
	3,650	2,220	ARAB ALUM. IND.	9	0.00	12	10850	4991	.46	.46	-
	450	450	LIVERPOOL & POLTRY	9.7	0.00	12	10850	4991	.46	.46	-
	.770	.510	NATIONAL INDUS.	9	0.00	56	175050	103978	.58	.60	.02
	1,160	410	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	6	2000	875	.44	.44	-
	.860	.520	JOR. NUCLEAR INDUS.	9	0.00	8	3500	1958	.58	.57	-0.01
	4,610	2,200	ALADDIN CO.	25.2	2.67	1	350	1050	2.90	3.00	.10
S	3,000	1,160	NATL. CABLE WIRE. HFAC	32.5	0.00	4	5300	6854	1.30	1.35	.05
	.890	.590	JOR. SULPH. CHEM.	9	0.00	4	3600	1460	.60	.61	.01
	1,610	1,160	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	15.3	5.83	21	98500	117243	1.29	1.20	-0.01
S	1,800	820	UNIV. MOD. INDUS.	P	.25	9	23450	20287	.87	.86	-0.01
	1,410	.690	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	12.2	13.10	43	26050	19298	.72	.76	.04
	1,220	1,220	WAT. CGL. W.	14.0	7.73	34	500	1000	1.68	1.68	-
	1,040	810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	16.5	0.00	5	4550	4095	.90	.90	-
	1,970	1,340	EL - SAY READY WEAR	51.7	0.00	20	4798	6893	1.40	1.47	.07
	1,330	1,000	INTL. TOURISM	6.5	9	9750	11601	1.31	1.19	-0.12	
	1,200	.860	UNION CH. & VEG.	4.4	0.00	34	307150	307163	1.00	1.05	.05
	.840	.570	MID. EAST COMPLEX	7.6	16.13	10	6000	3610	.61	.62	.01
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 113.04 %CHG: -1.33 387 902487 1682659											
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 168.28 %CHG: -0.55 629 1314913 2514591											
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 21/12/1997											
	.610	.340	JOR. TRADE FAC.	9.9	0.00	16	27000	9888	.36	.37	.01
	1,550	1,060	ZARA FOR INVESTMENT	81.3	0.00	3	600	730	1.18	1.24	.06
	.800	.660	UNION INV. 507	9	0.00	10	29000	6090	.71	.71	-
	.570	.360	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	4	49750	24974	.48	.50	.02
N	1,000	.720	AL-SHARQ INV. CO.	P	0.00	2	20000	18600	.93	.93	-
	1,180	.850	UNITED FOR PYRAM. INV	64.0	0.00	1	250	308	1.17	1.23	.06
	.380	.440	JOR. INDUS. CHEM. - JEDCO	9	0.00	1	1000	160	.18	.18	-
	.650	.440	ARAB FOOD & MED.	9	0.00	4	1350	652	.48	.49	.01
	.530	.280	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	36.9	0.00	17	23750	7600	.31	.32	.01
	.320	.600	NATL. TELECOM.	9	0.00	4	4000	160	.40	.41	.01
	.750	.380	NATL. MULT. ENG. MANUFACT.	9	0.00	48	102850	55539	.51	.33	-.18
	1,420	.860	UNION TOBACCO 751	9	0.00	6	3201	3756	1.42	1.42	-
	.730	.560	NATL. TRADING	9	0.00	38	35380	27630	.69	.70	.01
	.470	.280	INDUS. ENG.	9	0.00	8	8700	3634	.30	.32	.02
	.830	.570	INDUS. CERAMIC	16.5	0.00	13	23950	15039	.60	.63	.03
	.820	.490	INDUS. CERAMIC	16.5	0.00	13	23950	15039	.60	.63	.03
N	1,000	.650	NAT. ALUMINIUM. 754	94.6	0.00	15	14250	6128	.55	.58	.01
	1,050	.720	ARAB INT. FOOD FACT.	43.4	0.00	1	250	225	.87	.90	.03
GRAND TOTAL 237 729931 444372											

Austria's Mayer wins as Tomba crashes out

ALTA BADIA (AFP) — Austria's Christian Mayer swept to victory in the World Cup giant slalom here on Sunday, after Italian idol Alberto Tomba crashed out of the second run.

Mayer, the 1994 Olympic bronze medalist at Lillehammer and who was leading after the first run, clocked a combined time of 2min 20.97sec.

Switzerland's Michael Von Gruenigen, who had been hoping for his third victory in four races, had to settle for second place in 2:21.40, while Austria's overall World Cup leader Hermann Maier was third in 2:21.63.

It was another devastating victory for the Austrian ski machine, which after filling the top five places in the second downhill at Beaver Creek, filled seven of the top eight places here.

The biggest loser of the day was Tomba, who had won here four times before and had been promising his fans a Christmas present, either at Alta Badia or at Madonna di Campiglio in Monday's slalom.

Organisers spent more than five minutes working



Italian Alberto Tomba passes a gate on the first run of the men's World Cup Giant Slalom race in Alta Badia December 21. Tomba, the local favourite, clocked the sixth best time in the first run, but skied out on the second run after losing his footing (Reuters photo)

on the piste before Tomba went down, after he had moved up to sixth place in the first run, having started with No. 19.

But the triple Olympic champion, who had complained about the state of the piste after the first run,

lost his balance completely after half a minute of the second. He just about managed to stay upright but promptly straddled a gate with his legs wide apart.

Instead, the day's glory went to 25-year-old Mayer, whose only previous World

Cup win was in the giant slalom at Val d'Isere in 1994.

Consolation for Von Gruenigen was holding on to his lead in the giant slalom World Cup standings, while Maier remains in the overall lead.

No change at top of Bundesliga

BONN (AFP) — Kaiserslautern maintained their surprise title challenge in the Bundesliga on Saturday when they saw off a battling Cologne 3-2 to stay four points clear of champions Bayern Munich, winners by the same score at Wolfsburg.

But the biggest score of the day came at Bayer Leverkusen, who went above Schalke into fourth spot after crushing third-placed Stuttgart 6-1 despite being without the suspended Ulf Kirsten.

Leverkusen tore into a three-goal lead inside the opening 20 minutes with two from Stefan Beinlich and another from Paulo Rink, who later scored a second.

Lehnhoff and Heintze completed the rout with Fredi Bobic on target for the shell-shocked visitors.

It was a magic moment for Leverkusen coach Christoph Daum, who earlier signed a new deal with the club and who coached Stuttgart for three seasons between 1990 and 1993.

Ghanaian international Samuel Osei Kuffour scored Bayern's winner at unheralded Wolfsburg, who had pushed their way to the fringes of the top six in their first top-flight campaign, to keep the Bavarians in the hunt.

Mehmet Scholl and Carsten Jancker had given Bayern a two-goal first half

lead before the hosts stormed back to level through Claudio Reyna and Detlev Dammeier only for Kuffour to hit the winner in the 79th minute.

Kaiserslautern had Danish international Michael Schjonberg-Christensen to thank for their win as he hit the winner with nine minutes left to end Cologne's brave resistance. Bulgarian midfielder Marian Hristov with a header and Thomas Riedl got the others for the title-chasers, who shrugged off the loss of the injured Olaf Marschall and Pavel Kuka.

"It was a fine match — especially for the fans, although maybe not for the coaches," said Kaiserslautern coach Otto Rehnhagel afterwards.

Cologne counterpart Lorenz-Gunter Kostner complained that his side gave too much quarter in the tackle.

Elsewhere, Arminia Bielefeld gained a 2-1 win over Karlsruhe to aid their fight against the drop.

Iranian strike partners Karim Bagheri and Ali Daei both on target to take their side out of the bottom four.

1860 Munich are back in the relegation morass after losing 1-0 at home to Werder Bremen, who move up to seventh behind Duisburg, who beat struggling Bochum with a brace from Bachirou Salou.

SCOREBOARD

Confederations Cup

Third-place match		
Czech Republic	1	Uruguay 0

NFL

Green Bay	31	Buffalo 21
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English Football League

English Division One		
Bury	1	Sheff Utd 1
Crewe	0	Sunderland 3
Man City	0	Middlesbrough 0
Norwich	0	Stoke 0
Nottm Forest	2	Stockport 1
Port Vale	1	Ipswich 3
Portsmouth	0	Charlton 0
Reading	0	Wolverhampton 2
Swindon	1	Birmingham 1
Tranmere	0	Oxford Utd 1
West Brom	0	Huddersfield 2
English Division Two		
Blackpool	2	Preston 1
Bournemouth	0	Watford 1
Bristol City	1	Chesterfield 0
Grimsby	1	Carlisle 0
Luton	2	Bristol Rovers 4
Millwall	1	Wycombe 0
Northampton	2	Plymouth 1
Wigan	4	Brentford 0
Wrexham	0	Gillingham 0
English Division Three		
Brighton	0	Shrewsbury 0
Darlington	1	Scunthorpe 0
Exeter	3	Rochdale 0
Hartlepool	2	Mansfield 2
Leyton Orient	2	Hull 1
Macclesfield	1	Cardiff 0
Peterborough	5	Lincoln City 1
Swansea	1	Cambridge Utd 1
Torquay	0	Notts County 2
English Premiership		
Aston Villa	1	Southampton 1
Blackburn	3	West Ham 0
Derby	0	Crystal Palace 0
Leeds	2	Bolton 0
Leicester	0	Everton 1
Liverpool	1	Coventry 0
Sheff Wed	1	Chelsea 4
Tottenham	3	Barnsley 0

German League

Arminia Bielefeld	2	SC Karlsruhe 1
Bayer Leverkusen	6	VfB Stuttgart 1
MSV Duisburg	2	VfL Bochum 0
Kaiserslautern	3	Cologne 2
VfL Wolfsburg	2	Bayern Munich 3
1860 Munich	0	Werder Bremen 1
Borussia Dortmund	2	Schalke 04 1
B. Moenchengladbach	4	Hertha Berlin 2

Portuguese League

Salgueiros	2	Maritimo 0
Sporting Braga	2	Vitoria Setubal 2

Belgian League

Saint-Truiden	0	FC Brugge 2
Mouscron	0	Genk 2
Anderlecht	2	Beveren 0
Lommel	2	Westerlo 1
Standard Liege	3	Gent 3
Lokeren	5	RWD Molenbeek 0

Spanish First Division

Barcelona	3	Madrid 1
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Rangers take lead

GLASGOW (AFP) — Gordon Durie struck a superb hat-trick as Rangers stormed back to the top of the Scottish Premier Division table with a 5-2 demolition of former leaders Hearts on Saturday.

Hearts were overrun by the champions, who con-

tinued to turn on the style despite being reduced to 10 men in the 69th minute when Gennaro Gattuso was sent off for his second yellow card.

Italian goal machine Marco Negri grabbed his 31st goal of the season, from the penalty spot, and

Jorg Albertz was also on target.

Hearts' consolation scores came from veteran striker John Robertson and substitute Jim Hamilton, but they were totally out-

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TODAY AT	PHILADELPHIA "1" Nick Nolte & Shaquille O'Neal ... in BLUE CHIPS Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	PHILADELPHIA "2" Richard Gere & Sharon Stone ... in INTERSECTION Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	PLAZA Nour Al Sharif & Layla Alwi... in AL MASEER (Arabic) Winner in the 1997 Cannes festival Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30	CONCORD A CRIME AT THE WHITE HOUSE Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 MR. BEAN Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	GALLERIA 1 ABDOUN Harrison Ford ... in AIR FORCE ONE Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45	GALLERIA 2 ABDOUN Mel Gibson & Julia Roberts... in CONSPIRACY THEORY Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Hisham Yanes Theatre TEL: 625155 NOW ON DAILY THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE Starring Hisham Yanes and Amal Dabbas For reservations call: 640155, 625155
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1st Division Handball Championship

Arabi win; Salt, Ahli share 23-point lead

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The sixth week of the second leg of Handball's First Division Championship ended with Al Salt and Al Ahli sharing the lead with 23 points each, Al Salt leading on goal difference.

A heated competition is expected between Al Salt and Al Ahli for the lead when they meet next week. Al Ahli took an easy two points after Yarmouk. Al Shouneh declined to show up and according to the Jordan Handball Federation's rules Al Shouneh were considered the losers.

Al Arabi stayed in the third place with 22 points from a 38-26 (18-9) win over Amman.

In another match Al Hussein overcame Umm Jozeh 32-28 (14-11).

Al Arabi 38 Amman 26: Al Arabi struggled to stay in third place and gave the match their best against 6th placed Amman.

STANDINGS

Team	W	D	L	Gf	Ga	Pts
Salt	11	1	-	395	292	23
Al Ahli	11	1	-	392	296	23
Arabi	11	-	2	464	356	22
Hussein	7	1	5	382	372	15
Umm Jozeh	4	1	9	339	418	9
Amman	3	1	8	359	380	7
Kufranjeh	2	2	9	356	426	5
Y. Shouneh	2	-	11	333	370	4

Kufranjeh withdrew

Al Arabi took the lead from the beginning and displayed what organised attacks and accurate passes can do in a match.

Al Arabi ended the first match 18-9, and went on to win the match 38-26.

Bulls, Pacers win; Bucks beat Knicks

EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey (AP) — Dennis Rodman grabbed a season-high 24 rebounds and Michael Jordan ignited an 11-point fourth quarter run that led the Chicago Bulls to their fourth straight win, 100-92 over the New Jersey Nets on Saturday.

Jordan finished with 24 points in a so-so performance that gave Bulls coach Phil Jackson his 49th career coaching victory.

If Chicago wins one of its next two games, Jackson would break Pat Riley's record for fewest games to reach the 500-victory milestone.

Washington Wizards 94, Toronto Raptors 92: In Toronto, Chris Webber scored 28 points and tipped-in a missed shot at the buzzer to lift Washington to its fourth straight win.

Raptors coach Darrell Walker ran onto the court to protest the shot, claiming it went down after the buzzer, but to no avail.

Los Angeles Lakers 109, Charlotte Hornets 100: In Charlotte, North Carolina, Nick Van Exel scored 11 points in the final 3:06 as Los Angeles gained its league-leading 10th road win.

Van Exel finished with a team-high 24 points to lead seven Lakers in double figures. Eddie Jones contributed 19 points and Rick Fox had 17. Los Angeles connected on 10 of 20 shots from 3-point range.

Detroit Pistons 115,

Philadelphia 76ers 78: In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Jerome Williams had career-highs of 22 points and 13 rebounds off the bench to lead the Detroit to a rout of Philadelphia.

The game was Detroit's highest-scoring of the year, and the margin of victory was its biggest ever against the 76ers.

Miami Heat 99, Atlanta Hawks 92: In Miami, Alonzo Mourning made his first start of the season and blocked two of Steve Smith's shots down the stretch to help Miami over Atlanta in a matchup of Eastern Conference leaders.

Tim Hardaway, who was held scoreless Wednesday night, scored 18 points with 13 assists and a franchise-record eight steals.

Indiana Pacers 95, Orlando Magic 92: In Orlando, Florida, Chris Mullin and Mark Jackson scored 18 points each and Indiana scored 12 of its last 16 points from the foul line to hold off Orlando and win its sixth straight.

Seikaly scored a season-high 37 points and grabbed 12 rebounds for Orlando.

Minnesota Timberwolves 92, Los Angeles Clippers 91: In Minneapolis, Kevin Garnett's tip-in with 5.8 seconds to play highlighted a dizzying final 11 seconds as Minnesota upended Los Angeles.

Garnett had 20 points and 14 rebounds and Stephon Marbury, who came off the bench due to a sore toe, contributed 16 assists.

San Antonio Spurs 100, Houston Rockets 87: In San Antonio, Avery Johnson scored a season-high 21 points as San Antonio avenged its worst loss of the season.

Clyde Drexler paced the Rockets with 26 points and 10 rebounds, and Charles Barkley scored 22 and had 14 boards.

Sacramento Kings 89, Dallas Mavericks 88: In Dallas, Corliss Williamson matched a career-high with 27 points and rookie Michael Stewart made a key block in the final minute as Sacramento ended a nine-game road losing streak.

The Mavericks have lost eight in a row.

Milwaukee Bucks 98, New York Knicks 78: In Milwaukee, Patrick Ewing dislocated a bone in his

right wrist when he fell hard and New York matched its season-low for points in a loss to Milwaukee.

Ewing, attempting to dunk an alley-oop pass from Charlie Ward with 24.9 left in the second quarter, was fouled by Andrew Lang and broke his fall with his arms before landing on his tailbone. X-rays revealed the dislocation in Ewing's right hand.

Phoenix Suns 102, Denver Nuggets 81: In Denver, Steve Nash scored a career-high 20 points as Phoenix handed Denver its seventh straight loss.

Danny Manning added 15 points and Antonio McDyess had 13 points and five rebounds in his first trip back to Denver since being acquired by the Suns on Oct. 1 in a three-team deal.

Chelsea, Blackburn turn up the heat

LONDON (AFP) —

Chelsea and Blackburn kept up the pressure on English Premiership leaders Manchester United with crushing victories over Sheffield Wednesday and West Ham respectively on Saturday.

Chelsea were in irresistible form as they swept to a 4-1 win over Wednesday which keeps them in third, two points behind United, who visit Newcastle on Sunday, and one behind Blackburn, who cruised to a 3-0 win over the Hammers.

Chelsea were back to their formidable best after last week's 0-0 home draw against nine-man Leeds and their four goals took their tally to 29 in the last 10 games.

Chelsea had started slowly before Dan Petrescu sparked the rout on 30 minutes with further goals coming from Gianluca Vialli, Frank Leboeuf (penalty) and Tore Andre Flo.

"Sometimes football is like a boxing bout," said Chelsea boss Ruud Gullit. "You just have to see what the opposition are doing at the start and react to them."

Wednesday boss Ron Atkinson, meanwhile, was furious with his players' display, blasting: "Performance? We haven't played and we've had a good spanking."

A rare goal from Stuart Ripley sent Blackburn Rovers on their way to victory over West Ham before Damien Duff's goals in the 50th and 71st minutes rubber-stamped the win.

Rovers boss Roy Hodgson said he was delighted at how well Duff replaced the



Tottenham Hotspur midfielder David Ginola (C) is fouled by Barnsley's Eric Tinkler (R) during their Premiership match against Barnsley at White Hart Lane. Tottenham won the match 3-0 (Reuters photo)

suspended Chris Sutton up front and he felt their tactical game plan worked perfectly.

French star David Ginola earned himself a bottle of champagne from Spurs manager Christian Gross, who had challenged him to score with a header against Barnsley in the bottom-of-the-table clash at White Hart Lane.

Ginola scored his second goal of the game when he finished off a flowing five-man move with his prize and seal a 3-0 victory.

Gross said: "It was a way of motivating the player? He is a very important player for us. I am trying to get the best out of all the team and Ginola is a Frenchman, yes? He will like the champagne — it will be a good vintage."

Late goals from Portuguese midfielder Bruno Ribeiro and Dutch striker Jimmy Hasselbaink sealed a 2-0 home win for Leeds

Under-fire Everton boss Howard Kendall breathed a sigh of relief after a late goal from Gary Speed clinched his side's first away triumph in the Premiership for 12 months.

Speed struck an 89th minute penalty to secure three points for the Merseyside strugglers on their travels for the first time since winning at Derby last December.

Kendall said "We have had to wait a long time for this day, and I'm delighted that it's finally arrived." Roy Evans hailed superb Michael Owen's goalscoring display in Liverpool's 1-0 win over Coventry.

England coach Glenn Hoddle was reported as having doubts about Owen's off-the-field behaviour, but the Liverpool boss defended his 18-year-old goal sensation.

Evans said: "I saw no problems with Michael out there, but then I have never seen any problems with him."

"He did his talking out there. Apart from his goal, his work rate was exceptional."

In the day's other matches, Aston Villa and Southampton shared the points in a 1-1 draw at Villa Park while Derby and Crystal Palace battled each other to a goalless stalemate.

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NORTH
♠ A 9 8 3
♥ Q 10 4
♦ A Q
♣ 10 7 6 5

WEST
♠ J 10 5 4
♥ K 7
♦ K 6 3
♣ K Q 4 2

EAST
♠ 8 6
♥ 9 8 5
♦ J 9 6 5 2
♣ A J 9 3

SOUTH
♠ K Q 7 2
♥ A Q 6 3 2
♦ 10 7 4
♣ 8

The bidding:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1♠ Pass 2♠ Pass
2♥ Pass 4♥ Pass
4♠ Pass 4♠ Pass

Opening lead: King of ♠

Don't put all your eggs in one basket. You never know when you are going to run into a bad break. The bidding is not without interest. With a minimum opening bid, three-card support and a ruffing

value, North chose a raise to two hearts rather than introduce a new suit. By raising South's two-spade game try to three, North confirmed four-card spade support and only three hearts. Therefore, it might have been wiser for South, who had enough to proceed to game because of the double fit, to select four spades rather than four hearts. West led the king of clubs and continued with the queen, declarer ruffing. South, Erik Spector of Manhattan, took a successful diamond finesse, then ran the ten of hearts to West's king. The club return was ruffed, and declarer cashed the ace of hearts and, when trumps split 3-2, completed the dummy reversal by crossing to the ace of diamonds and ruffing the last club with the jack of trumps. A spade to the ace provided the entry to draw the outstanding trump with the queen. All these maneuvers proved essential when spades broke 4-1 and declarer had to concede a spade trick. In all, South scored one trump in hand and one in dummy, three club ruffs in hand, three spades and two diamonds — exactly 10 tricks.

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1. Board of Trustees for Zakat Hospital
c/o Tulkarm Zakat Committee
Tel/Fax: 00 (972) - (8) - 673172
P.O. Box 444 Tulkarm, West Bank, PNA

OR
2. Ghaleb Qe'dan bio-Medical Engineering Bureau
Tel/Fax: 00 (962) - (8) - 5529242
P.O. Box 436
11831 Amman - Jordan

Eligible suppliers may obtain free information document about the hospital from the above mentioned addresses. Results of pre-qualification shall be announced and advised to participants as soon as they become available. Pre-qualification documents should include the following:

1. Financial capability of the supplier (Financial references to be provided).
2. Technical capability of the supplier, including details of experience and background of personnel... etc.)
3. Detailed documents showing similar projects executed by the supplier, full names and addresses of firms for who such services were rendered, and details of projects including contract cost and completion periods.

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Gulf Arab leaders meet with focus on Iran, Iraq

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Gulf Arab leaders were meeting behind closed doors Sunday, the second day of their annual summit, after the Kuwaiti hosts called for a "new chapter" in relations with Iran but condemned Iraqi defiance.

The leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) — which groups Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) — were to discuss a communiqué to be issued Monday.

Several meetings were held on the sidelines of the summit Sunday, including one between the emirs of Bahrain and Qatar. Sheikh Issa Ben Salman Al Khalifah and Sheikh Hamad Ben Khalifah Al Thani.

Bahrain boycotted the GCC summit in Doha last year because of a territorial dispute with Qatar.

The Qatari emir also met UAE President Sheikh Zaid Ben Sultan Al Nahyan, after the UAE failed to show up for the Doha economic conference held in November.

That conference was boycotted by several Arab countries, including Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah opened the 18th GCC summit Saturday saying he "felt a new era has begun in our neighbourly relations" with Iran. Ties between Iran and Gulf Arab states have often been tense in the past.

He called on Iran to resolve

a long-running dispute with the UAE over the sovereignty of the three islands in the southern Gulf "by peaceful means... to enable us to open a new chapter in our relations."

The emir said Baghdad continues to evade U.N. resolutions which "contributes to the continuation of sanctions and the suffering of the brotherly people of Iraq." A U.N. embargo was imposed after the August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah said Gulf Arab leaders were united in their stance on Iraq, after Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Abdul-Aziz said the region should put "past sufferings and events" behind it. Sheikh Sabah told the daily Al Rai Al Aam that the crown prince, who made the comments on arriving at the head of the Saudi delegation, was speaking about "the differences between the GCC states... and not the subject of Iraq."

GCC Secretary-General Jamil Al Hujailan, in an interview with the pan-Arab daily Al Hayat, called on Iraq to implement U.N. resolutions but also to behave in a way that "inspires confidence" and does "not accept aggressive acts."

"We hope that there are better relations between the United States and Iran because the tension in their relations is not in the interest of stability in the region," the GCC chief said.

Gulf Arab states set to boost defence communications

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a group of oil-rich Arab states, is to boost its defensive abilities by setting up a joint operations room, the official Kuwaiti news agency KUNA said Sunday.

KUNA quoted GCC diplomatic sources saying the six GCC states, whose leaders are in Kuwait for an annual summit, are expected to back multi-million dollar plans to link their radar systems and set up a secure communications link.

The agency said the projects will be completed in two years and "will pave the way to establish a joint operations room in one of the Gulf states so that it is possible to deal with any danger facing any of the GCC states."

The first project, worth \$88 million, will link the radar and air warning systems of the GCC, that groups Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The second project to set up a secure fibre-optic communications link between the six countries will cost \$70 million.

Military sources in November said the U.S. firm Hughes Space and Communications International has been picked for the radar link, while Sweden's Ericsson had been chosen to lay the fibre-optic cable.

Kuwait, invaded by Iraq in August 1990, has said regional security is a top priority for this summit. The GCC has a 4,000 strong defence force called Peninsula Shield, but has yet to implement plans to expand it to 15,000.

The comments were made to KUNA after the drafting committee of the GCC began meetings on Sunday to prepare the final communiqué for the three-day summit to be issued on Monday.

KUNA quoted conference sources saying GCC leaders have agreed on all the political items listed on the agenda, including one calling on Iraq to implement all U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Other resolutions cover the UAE's long-running dispute with Iran over the sovereignty of three islands in the southern Gulf and the Arab-Israeli peace process, the sources said.

Iraq completes food plan for third phase of U.N. programme

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq has completed its latest food distribution plan and will submit the proposal to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan this week. Trade Minister Mohammad Mehdi Saleh said Sunday.

Earlier this month, Iraq announced it would not sell oil under the third phase of the U.N.-approved oil-for-food programme until the United Nations agrees to its new plan for distributing food, medicine and other necessities nationwide.

Iraq on Saturday again accused the U.S. of trying to prolong punishing economic sanctions by "keeping the Security Council busy with artificial questions."

A statement issued after Iraqi President Saddam Hussein met with senior aides added that Iraq "will not remain hand-cuffed before this repeated American ploy to win time and keep postponing the subject [of sanctions] from one month to another and one year to another."

The strongly worded statement was the first by the Iraqi leadership since a Russian-brokered deal last month eased a crisis with the U.S. over Iraq's expulsion of American weapons inspectors.

Iraqi newspapers on Sunday also criticised the chief U.N. arms inspector, Richard Butler, for saying last week that Iraq still appears to be hiding information on its banned weapons programmes.

"He is a liar, he is corrupt," Al Thawra, the paper of the ruling Baath Party, said.

It added: "By inaccurate, subjective and biased conduct, Butler provided the United States with a new excuse to continue its hostile and feverish activities against Iraq."

The paper also said Mr. Butler's insistence that U.N. monitors be allowed to visit presidential palaces was provocative. Baghdad has said presidential palaces and other so-called "sensitive sites" are off-limits to inspectors on grounds access would violate Iraq's sovereignty.

Mr. Saleh told a news conference that the food distribution plan was completed Saturday.

"It should be submitted to the U.N. secretary-general in a few days," he added.

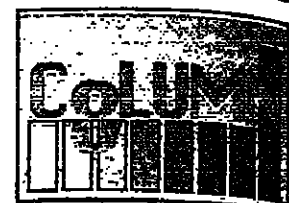
He said he expected Iraqi oil exports to resume after Mr. Annan acts on the proposal.

The United Nations' aid coordinator in Iraq, Denis Halliday, confirmed that Iraq had completed its proposal. U.N. workers earlier finished their proposal for the three Kurdish provinces in northern Iraq, where the U.N. carries out food distribution.

Mr. Halliday said he expected to have both plans in hand by Monday or Tuesday for submission to Mr. Annan.

Neither he nor Mr. Saleh gave details of their contents.

At the news conference, Mr. Saleh also complained about slow deliveries of medicine. He told reporters that Iraq had received just \$36 million worth of medicine from the \$210 million earmarked for health care.



Archbishop takes Christmas service to Britain's supermarkets

LONDON (AFP) — British Christmas shoppers flocking to supermarkets on Sunday for their annual food-buying frenzy can hear the word of God as the Archbishop of Canterbury's Yuletide sermon booms over supermarket loudspeakers. At 3:00 p.m. customers jostling in the aisles of 216 Asda supermarkets across Britain can raise their voices in song as Dr George Carey broadcasts his Christmas service from a branch of the chain in Essex, southeast England. The archbishop hopes his initiative, the first of its kind, will encourage vicars to emerge from their churches and meet potential flocks of worshippers in their everyday lives.

Florida man survives oncoming train, still gets traffic ticket

FORT LAUDERDALE (AFP) — Hans Weschitz may have been lucky enough to escape his stalled car just seconds before an oncoming locomotive slammed into it — but he could not escape the traffic ticket police issued him. Weschitz's 1989 Toyota pickup truck stalled as he was trying to cross a rail line, and managed to unbuckle his seat belt and bolt from the vehicle seconds before the locomotive of an oncoming train slammed into it. Police were unimpressed with the feat, and issued him a ticket for not stopping at the red light that indicated the train crossing.

European bees delay Boeing aircraft

RIO DE JANEIRO (AFP) — First there were the black vultures, which Brazilian airport authorities managed scare away using fireworks. Then, Brazil's terminals were plagued by a new invader: aggressive bees that have swarmed into Rio's international airport this week, delaying the departures of aircraft. The takeoff of a Boeing 767 was delayed because a swarm of the European bees had settled on the aircraft's nose. Fire-fighters dispersed the bees by spraying the aircraft with streams of water, and the plane eventually was able to depart. But the persistent insects then settled on the nose of another plane — and fire-fighters again were called into action.

Indian TV to get new sex channel

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India will next month have its first television sex channel featuring "fantasising striptease" and other attractions, newspapers reported. Suresh Kumar, chief of the Indian computer Global Internet Ltd, which is marketing the Plus 21 channel, told a news conference in Chandigarh that the channel would go on air at the end of January. Kumar said the 24-hour seven-hour telecast, beginning at 11 p.m., would progress from "an X-rating to triple X-rating." Open discussion of sex and steamy fare are frowned on in traditional Indian society. Kissing was taboo in Indian films until recently.

Swede speeds to Sotheby's to buy cape

NEW YORK (AP) — Not quite as fast as a speeding bullet, but still pretty quick, a Swedish bidder flagged a taxi cab and rushed to Sotheby's auction house on Saturday just in time to buy Superman's cape. Swedish computer executive Stefan Hallin only heard about the Hollywood and rock 'n' roll memorabilia auction the morning while watching television during breakfast in his Manhattan hotel room. Hallin "rushed" into a cab and got here in time, fortunately, he said after bidding \$17,000 for the Superman cape. Christopher Reeve wore in the 1978 film.

Palestinian, Israeli officials sign declaration in Athens

ATHENS (AFP) — Senior Palestinian and Israeli officials meeting in Athens signed a joint declaration Sunday pledging support for continuation of the Mideast peace process.

The two delegations, dominated by MPs from both sides, called on their

administrations to apply the Oslo peace accords and to avoid all unilateral actions that might further damage the already-troubled negotiations.

The declaration also called for Israeli blockades on Palestinian territories to be lifted.

Hosted by the Greek government, the three-days of closed-door talks which led up to the declaration were the second attempt by Athens to encourage progress between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Similar talks in July had resulted in no agreement being reached.

The Israeli delegation this time around comprised 12 MPs, among which was Meir Shitrit, MP for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing Likud Party. Others included representatives from the coalition government parties, members of the Shas ultra-orthodox party and of the main opposition Labour Party.

The 17-member Palestinian delegation was led by Marwan Barghout, head of the Fateh faction in the West Bank, and included Finance Minister Atef Allawneh and members of

the Palestinian Legislative Council.

European Union special Middle East envoy Miguel Angel Moratinos, who was following the talks, welcomed the outcome, saying such an accord would have been "unimaginable six months ago."

He noted: "It's the first time the Israeli coalition has adopted such an agreement."

However two representatives from each of the delegations, Barghout and Israeli MP Maxime Levy, acknowledged in a press conference that the discussions had not touched on the more contentious issues, such as competing claims to Jerusalem or Jewish settlements.

"The most important thing was the spirit" of the talks, Mr. Hussein said. Mr. Levy added that the idea was not to solve the problems but to start up dialogue alongside the peace process.

Greek Foreign Affairs Minister Theodoros Pangalos described the agreement as being of "historic importance," but stressed that Athens was not playing the role of mediator, merely offering its help.

300 Israeli Jewish, Arab workers protest textile factories closures

TEL AVIV (AFP) — About 300 Israeli Jewish and Arab workers held a demonstration in Tel Aviv Sunday to protest the recent closure of five textile factories and the transfer of jobs to neighbouring Arab states.

With unemployment at a three-year high of more than eight per cent, the protesters complained that Israeli textile firms had laid off thousands of workers at home while shifting production to Jordan and Egypt where wages are lower.

The protesters, most of them women, chanted "bread and work" outside the Tel Aviv headquarters of the Kial consortium.

Kial recently closed a string of textile plants in predominantly Arab areas of northern Israel, putting

1,000 people out of work.

The cabinet of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held a discussion early Sunday of ways to halt the rise in unemployment, officials said.

A special government committee is due on Monday to visit the southern Israeli town of Ofakim, where violence erupted last week during demonstrations by the unemployed.

Unemployment reached 8.1 per cent in Israel during the 2nd quarter — a three-year high.

The number of job-seekers rose another 1.2 per cent in September, prompting Labour Minister Eli Yishai to warn the country was headed towards a "social explosion."

Jordan Times Lottery Rules

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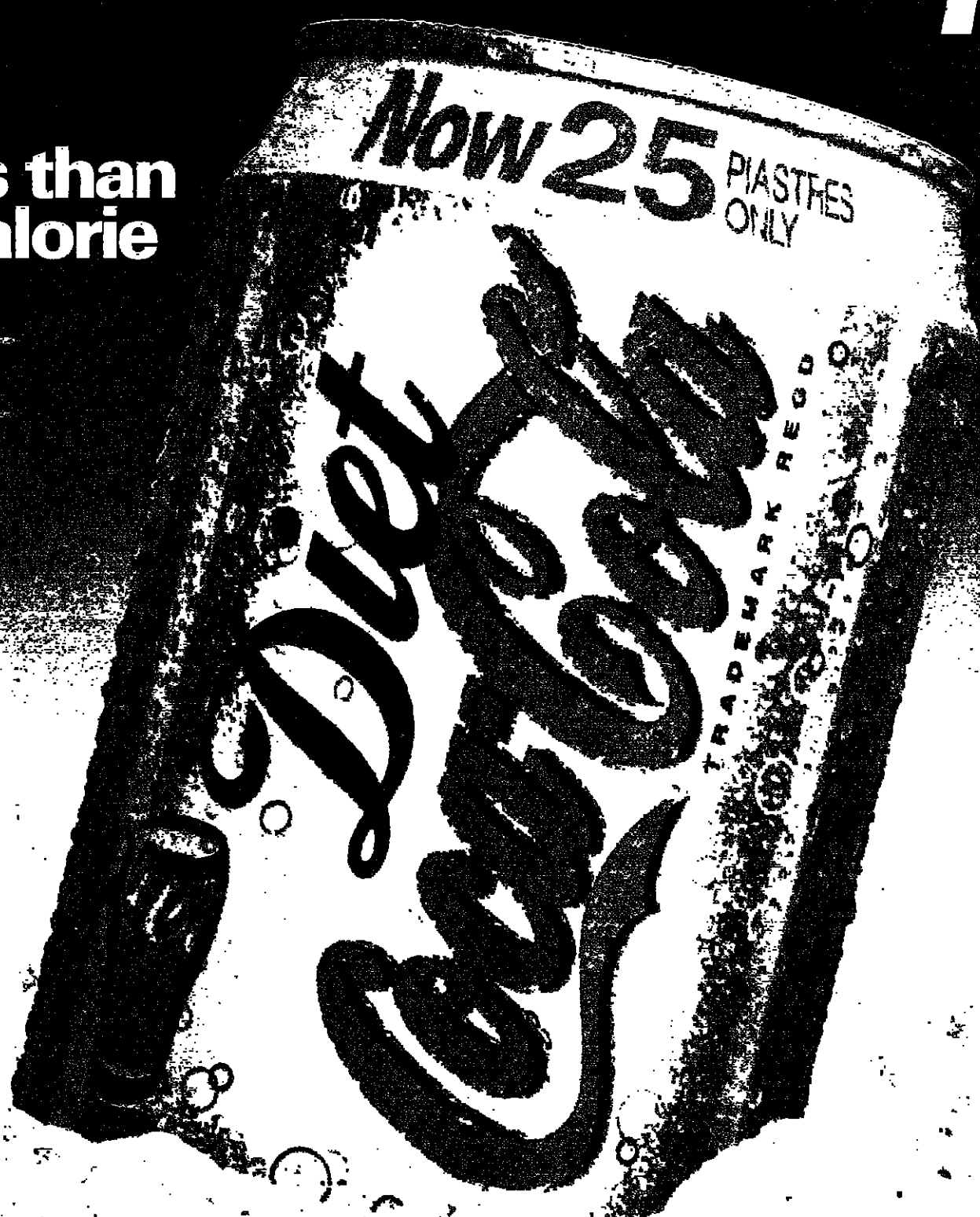
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